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The Socialist and the Prince

By

MRS. FREMONT OLDER

Frontispiece By
HARRISON FISHER

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
New York and London
1903

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The Socialist and the Prince

A deep, low murmur swelling from the ground;
A man impassioned, round whose nervous form
Eddied and swept a gale of gathering sound,
A deep-toned presage of the coming storm;

A sea of faces; and the sand-lots scored
By countless feet as, rising from his lair,
The lion Labor shook his mane and roared
A potent challenge through the darkening air;

A sudden silence eloquent as death;
And in the hush, as Destiny drew nigh,
A mighty spirit from the Lion's breath
Born in the land and nevermore to die.

—Lowell O. Reese.

THE SOCIALIST AND THE PRINCE

Chapter I

"THE CHINESE MUST GO!"

DURING the seventies nothing was extraordinary in San Francisco because everything was extraordinary.

The rainbow's pot of gold was found on Twin Peaks. It was quite possible.

Aladdin's lantern could be had for the asking. No one doubted it.

Jack's beanstalk had grown to the sky. Stars might be plucked by those who would climb. Was anything more logical?

Foot passengers were warned against stubbing their toes: there was danger of falling upon Comstock quartz projecting from the ground.

The gracious goddess Fortuna dwelt on Tamalpais. Life was too brief and merry to clamber up the sides of the purple mountain. Let Fortuna herself ascend—there were other goddesses to woo.

San Francisco was a drunk, delirious city. The population was divided into two classes, millionaires and those who hoped to be millionaires.

There is no hunger when thousands feast upon hope. A prospective owner of a bonanza could not make himself absurd by complaining of no breakfast. Amidst the sweat and smell of the workshop laborers considered the cut of their lackeys' livery.

The working man was never more prosperous. The working man was never more discontented. He had seen his companions close their eyes and open their hands. Directly the tail of a comet showered precious stones. These men gathered their treasures indifferently, drifted away from toil, spoke like gentlemen, looked like gentlemen, and were gentlemen.

Presently the working man believed something wrong when Seal Rocks did not nourish roses, and strawberries refused to thrive on sand-lots.

In the middle of the seventies came a cataclysm that changed the surface of San Francisco. A great bank failed.

That such an event could occur was a shock to the hope of the city. It was a hard world of reality after all. One could be sad in California as well as in the East, South, or across the seas from whence these adventurers came.

Even those who had not lost by the failure of the bank felt hungry after the occurrence.

Another catastrophe befell the city. Gold had been gushing from the veins of the gigantic Mazeppa mine. It was strange that none recognized the arterial blood flooding the State. The Mazeppa was dead.

Some dreamer had believed that still another heart of treasure might be found in this mine of Ophir. At one time quite probable, now it was as remote as the rainbow's base or Aladdin's lamp.

The peach-blossom hue left the air. Joy, youth, hope, ambition perished. Men, women, and children were hungry. They were even reduced to wishing that two "bits" might be changed into nickels. Many laboring men were idle.

The middle classes felt the pinch of need. The millionaires went back to the bar or sluice-box. To this day their descendants boast of the sums their grandfathers lost, and thus alleviate their present poverty.

There are still extant the deserted foundations of vast buildings begun at that period, but never finished.

Nickels were seen in currency. Values assumed rational form. The boom had burst.

It was not until then the laborer realized that,

while he had allowed himself to become intoxicated by the aroma of his harvest, thousands of yellow, insignificant worms had curled into the blossoms and destroyed them before the fruit came. These were the Chinamen.

If a cook was out of employment she was told that a Chinaman had taken her place. Laundrymen lost their clients because the Chinamen underbid them. Seamstresses famished while Chinamen performed their work. It was unfortunately true that the Chinaman usually labored more conscientiously than the Caucasian.

The Chinamen spent nothing for necessities or luxuries. None but California, the fabled land of riches, could endure the outflow of gold sent to China. There was no return from it except more Chinamen.

They came by every boat. They came over the borders. When news arrived of the plague in the Orient, the working man cried, "There is no plague but Chinamen."

Railroad builders, capitalists, fetched them by the hundred, and grew rich from the putrid social conditions of the rotting empires of the East.

There was no one to protest but a few politicians during campaigns. Objections ceased with election. The Chinaman promised to be a serviceable political issue of perennial utility.

Idle men huddled together and discussed their wrongs in the squares, parks, and on street corners. Often moved by their passions they swept into the Chinese localities, set fire to the buildings, and killed the occupants as they fled from the flames.

After the tempest of wrath subsided, nothing decisive or effective was done.

Sometimes San Francisco had a presentiment that it was to be destroyed by fire. This premonition seemed about to be fulfilled one evening. While the safety committee was discussing how to protect property and life, a cry went up the throat of the city that the Pacific Mail dock had been set on fire. It was thought to be the beginning of a general conflagration, and rioting began. In the struggle to suppress the rioters several laborers were killed.

The following day in every workshop and factory circulars were distributed. On them in black letters was printed:

This Evening

At GOLDEN GATE TEMPLE

A Working Man

WILL SAY

SOMETHING TO WORKING MEN

These leaflets were scattered wherever a laborer could be found, and were circulated by one man walking slowly. He appeared to take the measure of those he met. As he exchanged a few words with each recipient of his pamphlet he seemed to talk merely to observe. The calm gaze of his gray eyes fell upon the city in the same way. This stranger gave the impression of making an accurate map of San Francisco to be stowed away in his brain.

Every one turned to look at him because he wore a long, dark-blue cape lined with scarlet, extending nearly to his knees. Altho his hat was of the black felt common in the West, the fact that the broad brim was bent upward flat against the front of the crown made it marked.

Except for these two features the man might have been unnoticed, for he was not handsome as beauty is reckoned. His head had been modeled as it were by a vigorous, impulsive, masculine hand, which left it full of straight, inartistic, abrupt lines. His features had a crude, lumpy, unfinished appearance. A piece of flesh expanding into broad, coarse nostrils was his nose. True, steady eyes hid themselves in rough caverns. The man's brow was thick and strong, and the chin was its counterpart. It was a head that told of growling, terrible passions.

As the stranger walked the streets, from the man-

ner of holding his sturdy, heavy shoulders erect, in the poise of his head, in the resolute way of closing his lips, one read the surety of the lion's keeper who has tamed his own beast. The man knew just where to cudgel himself.

That evening Golden Gate Temple was filled, unto the highest gallery, by laborers, their wives, some curious spectators, and the reporters. It was something more than the usual assemblage of discontented when one of their number speaks. The better sort of artisan was present.

When the president of one of the unions arose to make a preamble to the introduction of the speaker, the audience became restless. The hope that he would soon finish enforced attention. The stranger, noting the faces surrounding him, listened to his predecessor.

With his hat and cape removed, the man looked like an American. Yet he might easily have been a Frenchman or German, altho he was a perfect type of no one race.

McCann, the president of the union, had few opportunities to address so large an audience. He was a huge, red-faced Irishman, and, charmed by the swells and glides of his own voice, dragged on wearyingly. Finally the stranger was the only person listening to McCann.

His eloquence promised to be endless when fifty voices chorused: "Shut up, McCann; you ain't the whole show. Give the other fellow a chance."

McCann could not talk against the tide, and so he ceased speaking of himself and, motioning his hand toward the stranger, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen: I have the pleasure to interduce to ye a brother working man, Mr. Stryne—Mr. Paul Stryne, the distinguished traveler and social philosopher. You all know of him."

None of them had heard his name before. McCann made his acquaintance but that morning. Yet they all applauded and cheered as Stryne bowed his acknowledgments.

There was something in the speaker's salutation which irritated the audience. His heels almost came together and the bow was that of a man of rank. For a moment the audience was chilled. They felt that he was not one of them, and that they were about to be lectured.

The people were reassured by Stryne's clothing, for a handkerchief, knotted loosely about the neck of his blue flannel shirt, took the place of a collar. As he arose to the height of five feet ten, he seemed like a boy prematurely old. He was not more than thirty.

After the applause subsided, Stryne began in a

low, deep voice, which was but a whisper of the reservoir of tone from which it was drawn:

"MEN AND WOMEN: How many are there present who want to hear lies? Hands up. Good! None. How many here want to listen to the truth? Everybody! Everybody! This is God's country after all. Very well, men and women, if you have the truth, remember it is not my fault. It is yours. You have voted for it. You shall have it."

These first few words convinced that he was an American working man. As Stryne continued his voice lost its music. The notes broke into discord, but they shrieked into the listeners' ears and held the thought.

"I have been introduced as a traveler and philosopher. Let me disabuse your minds. I am a laborer, a working man, like yourselves, and when I die I want no other obituary—An American, a working man.

"To be sure, I have seen more countries of the globe than this. I will tell you why. In the beginning I was a seaman. When I left my ship, want drove me from England to France, France to Germany, Germany to Italy, and from Italy back to the United States, my home. I can paint you no brilliant picture of my travels, for I saw only the poverty and misery of those countries.

"Which is the best government, you ask? Which is the worst? God knows. Everywhere it is the same story of protecting those who have and taking from those that have not. This crime has been seared into my eyes. Even in the United States, the Utopia of Jean Jacques, the ideal of Jefferson, the poor man is begging for work and the rich man is saying: 'You can't have it. I will go to Asia for laborers. Starve. I must grow richer.' In the United States this happens, and we, you and I, fools, allow it."

When the applause forced Stryne to cease speaking he said in somewhat lowered tones:

"MEN AND WOMEN: I am glad of your approval, for it shows that I am saying for you what you all feel and think. That is why you applaud. It is because I am your voice, because I am telling you the truth.

"This is the beginning but not the end of our acquaintance. We will battle for labor, for our right, and the truth many years. If ever you find I have deserted you and justice, men and women, hang me, I shall deserve it."

Stryne raised his hands in the air as he uttered these last words with a cry that reached the street. His fingers were knotty and compact, not so much from toil as from character. The wrists were as bluntly square and firm as his chin.

"First, men and women, I ask your permission to remove my coat. I never can talk with it on."

This act placed the stranger upon a footing of years of personal friendship with the spectators. His cheeks had flushed, his eyes darkened, and his brown hair was loosened unconsciously. As he stood before the audience he might not have been more than one and twenty. Speaker and listeners realized that they were connected by currents of sympathy that were destined to weld them together.

"If any man has a right to talk at a time of depression like this, it is I. Let me tell you, want rocked my cradle and I sucked the teat of hunger. I cried to my mother for bread and she gave me tears. I have trod the thorny valley of pain. Ever at my side was the black shadow of misery, the companion who never deserted me. The only philosophy I understand is that of grief.

"My friends, do you know why I am here speaking to you this minute? It is because of a sight I saw last night. Four poor young men, laborers, were shot down while defending Chinamen for a corporation of millionaires. They were volunteers who perished as nobly as any soldier. Where were the men whose property was attacked? At their clubs; in their houses on Nob Hill, eating ten-course dinners with their mistresses; in their yachts on the

Mediterranean—in any place but where they should be.

"Was any capitalist, bloated from the blood of the people, killed? Was any son of the plutocrat shot? No. Last night, as always, it was the poor man's son, the poor mother's son who died. My impulse, friends, was as generous as yours. I, also, was there defending the property of the Pacific Mail. When a nineteen-year-old boy fell over into my arms dead, I left you all.

"I said, 'Here we are dying for the rich and their Chinamen. Men, women, I've not slept since. One thought, one purpose has frenzied me, to arouse you to the use of the power that is in your hands, the ballot."

Perhaps it was not so much what Stryne said as his vehemence of utterance that held the audience dry-lipped awaiting more words. Greater approbation than applause came—silence.

"In the beginning I was asked the difference between the United States and the countries across the Atlantic. It is this: Here it is possible for each of us to have as much power in election as a Vanderbilt, a Gould, or an Astor. We all have reform in our hands. Let the laboring men organize into a solid mass which no charge from capital can break, and I tell you we will force justice from the gullets of the men on Nob Hill."

Stryne mopped his brow and the cords of his thick neck stood out like pencils. He realized that these simple impressionable beings before him had surrendered their souls to him, and he went on as if inspired by it. A smile crept about his lips at times as he spoke, and beautified his countenance. It broke the straight line of his mouth and gave it a gentle expression. The smile was doubly effective since for the most part his features were grim, determined, and sad. What the smile betokened no one could explain. To the audience it was the promise of hope, a rainbow illumining the world.

"Now, men and women, I want you to talk. Are we to keep on defending Chinamen? Are we to keep on defending Nob Hill, or are we to work for ourselves and the right?"

The audience failed not to respond with its brassy shrieks of "Yes!" Hats were thrown into the air, and the speaker realized that they and their passions were under his control.

"Good, my friends. You have decided it. You have voted.

"Men, working men, I appeal to you. Let me hear your voice again. How many present want to see your honest wives in rags that the capitalists may have harlots?

"Not one!

"How many have the heart to tell their children that there is no bread to be had because there is no work?"

Stryne's audience was growling with him. He shook his head and waved his fist until he was like a madman—to all but the reporters. The men had reached the point where he could have issued any commands and they would obey.

"Mothers, women, when you go to your homes to-night and find no food for your babes, it is not your fault, it is not your good man's fault. It is because it has been shipped across the seas to China. It has been stolen from you by great railroad builders, by great capitalists. Those jewels on my lady's bosom are yours. They belong to your hungry children. Are you willing to give up your food, women of the people of San Francisco, that those haughty dames who are no better than you may blaze at the opera?"

The flame of his youth and energy leaped from his lips and enkindled them all.

"I put it to you together, are you going to have liberty, or are you going to be chattels? I ask the great common man, the people—the word that next to liberty smacks the sweetest."

Stryne's soul was in his mouth and he launched forth into a review of California as he had learned

it in a few weeks. Not a man present could have given it more accurately. He spoke of the present and the future as it might be at the working man's behest.

"I warn you, men, that we can not live with these yellow creatures. We are in a cage of reptiles and the white man or the serpent must die. Am I going to help you drive them out? Shall we vote to ship them back to China? If they refuse to go, shall we drive them down into the sea? If the ballot fails, let it be the bullet. Shall we throw down the gage of battle to the lions of corruption? Shall we make the vow?"

Then the whole assembly arose and took the oath of allegiance to the principle.

"Remember, men and women of San Francisco, the law is our father and mother, but liberty is our soul. Our oath, whatever happens, *The Chinese must go!*"

Stryne raised his right arm with the gesture of a sword as he uttered the last word. It seemed that his voice was the heart and voice of the multitude. He expressed the innermost soul of the audience.

Before the echo of the speaker's words had died, the hundreds present took up the shout, "The Chinese must go!" It was on the street and the

ragged rabble everywhere was repeating it as a battle-cry.

"The Chinese must go!" took the place of bread and butter. It was the panacea for all ills and evils.

The words had been thundered down to them by a new Moses. Women threw their flowers, their last dimes, at the hero. They wept and touched his coat as if even that were holy. Stalwart men took the prophet up on their shoulders and swept down the street. His cape had been turned inside out and it flared behind him like a flame.

The leaders ran up Kearny Street and back again. As, proud of their abasement, they rushed down Market Street, holding Stryne aloft, the crowd gathered numbers. Everywhere there was but one cry, "Whatever happens, the Chinese must go." Men and women who had not heard the speech chanted the refrain.

Upon returning from the ferry some one shouted, "Nob Hill!" It was the impulse to send them headlong up California Street with the firebrand on their shoulders.

As the dwellers within the stately mansions looked down upon the thoroughfare, they realized that it was the beginning. What would the end be?

Chapter II

THE SAND-LOT

AD the Comstock risen or fallen in value fifty points San Francisco would not have been more alive than it was to the Golden Gate Temple meeting.

It was a comforting belief generally held that Stryne was a bomb which had exploded in its fall through the air. This was the view of the prosperous conservative classes. Only a few of these were sufficiently interested to attend his lectures.

It was the business of the newspapers to jeer at any serious influence that he could hope to exert. One young reporter wrote of him, "Stryne's passionate zeal makes him exaggerate conditions, but he believes the facts he gives." His journal refused to publish this opinion and he resigned and went back to college. There he wrote against modern journalism. The young man afterward had the satisfaction of seeing his paper make the same statement editorially.

The new agitator's audiences grew until there was no hall in the city large enough to contain them.

Tickets were given out as for the theater. The city was aflame with "The Chinese must go!"

Within a month Stryne opened a Working Men's Headquarters and employed several secretaries. He had underestimated his own strength and the readiness of the people for a leader. At this moment he was little more than one of the followers of his own principle, for the movement had become so great that he was whirled along with it. In spite of all this he accepted the changed situation with the royal complacency of heaven-born right descending from the dawn of history.

In private, he was still the same impassive, nerveless man as on the first day of his appearance. Around him assembled the anarchist despising all law and government, the blatant union leader, the gentleman semi-demented because evolution is invisible, and the helpless, hungry poor. Without him they were harmless, floating wreckage. By him they were congealed and they became a mass. Whether they were to be powerful or impotent depended upon Stryne.

At the Golden Gate Temple, Stryne frequently was lost in his hyperbolic phrases. When his audience was carried on by him until it fell at his feet, he convinced men that he had the eloquence of sincerity, but he was accused of resorting to the

tricks of the demagog and the theater. Honesty is doubted as often as hypocrisy is divined.

Certain it was that his words aroused all the latent action and daring within his hearers. The most indifferent left his presence inspired to do and create.

At the Working Men's Headquarters he ever united his followers by conciliating dissenting parties. The vulgar, the curious, the interested, could not weary his patience. Whatever replies he might make to the press publicly, privately he was cordial and kindly to the representatives of the journals that abused him.

Presently his following grew to such magnitude that he opened branches of the Working Men's Club in many parts of the city. From all of them floated the banner inscribed, "The Chinese must go!"

Those expecting to see the movement decrease were chagrined to learn that the agitator was obliged to speak at two or three different halls in one evening.

The newspapers more than the public marked his growing power and were vicious in their attacks. At first he replied, but later he said nothing. Finally *The Herald*, a morning journal, accused him of dishonesty, declared that he was sending out of the country the money that came into his possession.

When he entered Golden Gate Temple that eve-

ning, it was the first time he had met his followers since the article appeared. As he threw off his cape he found by the uncontrolled applause that he was but exalted by the assault.

Without preliminaries he strode straight to the rostrum. His face was yellow like ivory. Those close to him marked a band of scar on his brow which was crimsoned by his emotion. It might belong to one who for many years had worn a crown.

"My friends, between you and me there can be nothing but a frank understanding. Has *The Herald* ever fought for honesty, manhood, or justice?"

"No!"

"When was *The Herald* the supporter of the working man?"

"Never!"

"If you want to know whose cause *The Herald* champions, look at its subsidized columns. Every enemy that you and I have is turning his gold into the office of that paper.

"I want to hear your word. Am I your friend? Am I a thief? Either that is true or *The Herald* lies. Which is it? Do you want a paper in your house that stabs your friend? Will you support the organ of the Chinaman?"

Stryne's words were scarcely heard above the shouts, "Stop *The Herald!*" "Tear up *The Herald!*"

"Listen to me. How many friends have I here? How many want to read lies about me? How many present are to stop *The Herald* to-morrow? It does credit to your manhood that you all decline to aid our foes."

Three thousand names were taken from the subscription list of that journal the next day and added to *The Times*. It was the first definite awakening of the public to Stryne's power. Then came the triumph of the young reporter who saw his paper accept his own sentiment.

Henceforth there was a struggle between the two leading dailies to see which could have the greater portion of Stryne's favor and yet not offend subscribers. If they dared not openly praise him, at least all his speeches were fully reported and he was not abused for some time.

Heretofore the classes attacked had confidently expected the Chinese agitation to die. In six weeks after the advent of Stryne, however, the entire net-like far-reaching detective force of the United States was called into service to learn his antecedents.

Prominent but grammarless citizens who met him felt that he was a reproof to them in dignity and purity of English. They were certain that his manner and speech belonged to a gentleman, an adventurer, rather than a laborer. They asserted that

within two weeks Stryne would be compelled to leave town.

After long search the only trace of his history to be found was that he had come to the United States in a sailing-vessel from Italy. Already he had told his audiences as much. Detectives could no more bring to life his past than they could learn the route of a ship by looking at the ocean.

Working Men's Clubs continued to spring up. Laborers assumed the arrogance of that recent period when the gold fever raged and blotted the souls of men. From every hall and building of sufficient size capitalists were warned by discourse and flags that "The Chinese must go!" Still the Mongolians remained and sent thousands of dollars a week to the Orient.

Stryne appointed presidents of the clubs that he created and these men acted as under officers in the ranks. So thoroughly the great captain, he was above jealousy of his lieutenants. He was so sure of himself that he could demand the best of the best men. With the celerity of intuition he singled out the capable man and planted his hand on his shoulder with the touch and weight of destiny. From his corps of officers went out most of the men who have since become marked representatives of socialism in the United States.

The Working Men's Clubs were for the general improvement of laborers. Many of them had libraries and baths; some added gymnasiums. With alarm it was learned that these large rooms were nothing more than armories.

Panic paled the lips of the population, for after weeks of secrecy it became known that Stryne had been training his followers in warfare. It was true that the agitator had five thousand armed men at his call. Rumor, gray and yellow with fear, doubled, trebled the number. His cry, "If not with the ballot, then with the bullet," was recalled.

Bourgeois mediocrity sometimes looked at its neighbors and wondered suspiciously if they, too, might not be those murderous, lawless monsters, Strynites. Dreaming young men and emotional women believed not so much in his principles as in him, and so the sober, well-balanced portion of the community concluded that the time had positively come for his annihilation. His wild theories would then die disembodied.

Stryne soon realized that the "lions of corruption" returned his challenge to battle. When he went to Golden Gate Temple he found it closed. The Plaza Hall was not to be had. In front of Kearny Street Hall a mob of working men groaned at and hissed the owners who refused to allow another meeting of

Strynites. Money could not hire an assembly-room in the city. All had been rented to the "bandits of Nob Hill."

A large force of police was detailed to quell disturbances. Wherever Stryne went his disciples followed and the Kearny Street cars were obliged to cease running. It was suggested that an entrance to the hall be forced. No sooner were the words uttered than the chief brandished his arms in the air and shouted: "Back, men, you are only harming our cause. We are locked out of the halls of the city by our enemies. Could I have demonstrated to you so clearly that we should stand together? Thank God, they can not lock us out of the pure air of heaven. They would rob us of that if it were possible. March! Let us assemble on the sand-lot."

Stryne placed himself at their head and prevented them from storming up the street like enraged demons. The leader saved the thousands from themselves by keeping them back with his arms stretched to their full extent. This signal cooled their thoughts. The fear of the men that they would do Stryne bodily harm restrained them.

Slowly, sullenly, they went down Kearny Street and up Market until they reached a vacant block of sand near the site of the present City Hall. The peninsula of San Francisco is a waste of sand on

which parched shrubbery sparsely grows, but this one square of sand was made historic by Stryne as "The Sand-Lot."

There was no hall large enough to hold all his hearers, and the sand-lot contained more than he hoped to be able to assemble.

Directly the men reached the vacant lot they observed there was no rostrum for Stryne. They might have gone away without a speech but they were in too angry a mood. Their leader, their voice, must first thunder wrath and defiance to calm and cool their leaping, burning pulses.

Within a quarter of an hour a platform was erected for the speaker. In the dark he arose before the growing multitude and spread out his hands to silence the shouts of his admirers.

"We are not in Golden Gate Temple as we had hoped, but we are in God's own temple. He has not locked us out. He is not on the side of the monopoly, the railroad builders, and the Chinamen. Our new hall is larger, better ventilated, and we have the cheapest system of lighting in the world. I should like to look into your faces, but I see only their dim outline, for the Man who lights our candles in the sky is busy in another part of the universe."

This was no sooner said than behind Stryne blazed up flames which illuminated the square, the sur-

rounding buildings, disclosed the great, gaping mouth of the audience and its devouring eyes, and cast a glow upon the sky. It was characteristic of the way his followers anticipated his wishes.

The brush crackled, snapped, and clouds of fire swept down over him enveloping him until his voice seemed to come from the flame:

"MEN AND WOMEN: We ought to be grateful that the scoundrels sanctified by their stolen gold have taken our shelter from us. We ought on our knees to thank God for every misfortune that expands our strength and unites us into a great brotherhood.

"Those highwaymen covering themselves with the law's protecting mantle are laughing in their great houses because we are forced into the open air. Laugh on, for this is but the beginning of the beginning. The time will come when equality, justice, and liberty shall ascend the place of power and give you bandits new dwellings of stone, but these will belong to the State.

"Friends, let me tell you what I propose doing. This meeting shall be dismissed, but to-morrow night at eight o'clock all who hate the tyranny of consecrated thieves will march with me, and we will talk face to face with them. To-morrow night we will invade the robbers' den. We have been driven

from our home. They shall learn how we talk, what we believe, what we are. For the first time they will see what men are like. To-morrow night let us meet on Nob Hill."

Stryne's final sentence lifted them into the air and held them shouting, howling their enthusiasm for him to the skies. It was the first time that San Francisco had seen her people untempered by responsibility or rank, inflamed by injustice, poverty, hunger, and the great passion for the personality of Stryne.

Chapter III

NOB HILL

PERCHED on the highest, most arrogant hill of San Francisco are grim, gloomy residences that frown at the town lying below. Few of them appear to have been erected for private habitation. One might fancy that there was a contest among wealthy hypochondriacs to see who could build for himself the largest prison. Some day these houses will be used as museums.

At first in jest and then seriously this portion of the town was known as Nob Hill. It was Nob Hill which the laboring classes firmly believed caused their poverty. Consequently it was against Nob Hill that their hatred was directed.

The discontented despised the dwellers on the height for their exclusive position. It seemed to say to the lowly: "You must climb here on your hands and knees, for you have no carriages."

The houses of Nob Hill, joyless as money-vaults or tombs, were obnoxious because of their ostentation. Millionaires who modestly inhabited other quarters

gave little offense. To dwell on Nob Hill was to be set up as a target for socialism.

The succeeding day after Stryne's announcement that the next meeting would be held on the forbidden spot, few thought connectedly for any length of time. The air was hot and quivering, giving warning of an earthquake. It was deplored that the capitalists had been so aggressive.

Phlegmatic, well-regulated people became excited. The very young felt that at last history was about to be made. No one did anything to prevent the meeting. Everybody stopped after giving his opinion.

The millionaires were terror-stricken. Beldon, the railroad builder, urged his friends to flee with him to Mexico. He felt that they all were to be hanged. In Southern California he died from the shock which the fright gave his enfeebled constitution.

Walsingham, Pickens, and Hackett, younger and more vigorous, remained. They declared in their offices and clubs that they refused to move a jot for that fellow Stryne and his tramps. In reality their houses were secretly converted into arsenals. Their bravery was their confidence in a hundred guns which were to be trained upon Strynites should they attempt to destroy property or life. Six score special

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policemen engaged for this occasion added to their feeling of security.

Col. Knox Peyton, the mining magnate, was the only resident of Nob Hill who declined to flee, purchase guns, or ask assistance of the law. His brownstone house was the sole dwelling on the hill not an offense against beauty and taste.

Peyton was a Southerner past sixty, a widower with one daughter, Theodosia. In spite of their gentle breeding they sometimes smiled at the excentricities of manner, speech, and conduct of their neighbors. Instead of making their home a fortress, the Peytons even refused to recall their dinner invitations for the evening set for the meeting of the Strynites.

It was in February and the atmosphere was so hot and thick that those who could afford it drove to the beach and cliff. The jackals of excitement and disaster, altho equally indifferent to the cause of Nob Hill or the Strynites, had a hurried, early dinner and then crept up the height to see what was going to happen. It was almost as exciting as watching the first night of the opera from the sidewalk.

All the houses except the Peytons' in this portion of California Street were darkened. The occupants huddled behind the curtains, viewing with alarm the

newcomers who were awaiting Stryne and his followers.

The principals were late and the audience became impatient. Some of the people departed disgusted and sneering, "Of course he won't dare come."

"I knew that all the time. He won't make good."

Some one yelled, "He has sold out." Directly there were a buzz and murmurs of "Blackmail!" "Job." "No good." "I told you so."

Through the breathless expectant air came a roar like that of a brick building during an earthquake when each separate stone stirs and the whole structure threatens to topple to the ground. Nearer and louder came the sound until it was like the tramping of feet. It was the march of men, and the brains and eyes of those waiting flashed to one another the needless news: the Strynites were coming.

Women crawled away from the windows, and, shivering, looked at each other in silence. Children screamed in the nurseries. Wives fell weeping into their husbands' arms. The guards, carrying their Winchester rifles, paced the halls and chambers of the huge mansions.

At first there were but a few of the working men, the stragglers of the advance. Then came the mass, and to one looking down California Street it seemed that an endless black serpent uncoiled its form straight

for the purpose of striking an enemy who had thrown a rock on its head.

The body of men broke as they came up the hill. Presently every yard and street was blackened by the presence of the Strynites. They sat on the porches of the great houses and smoked as if they had come into their own. Some spat upon the veranda floors.

At last Stryne and his staff of assistants appeared through an opening which was involuntarily made for him.

It was a marked occurrence for these weaker men and they were incompetent and nervous. Had their leader fallen dead, they would have fled. Stryne, as usual, was wrapped in his heavy blue cloak. All bent in deference as he talked with them. Strangely enough he was relating with animation his emotions during a shipwreck. They pretended to listen but their thoughts fell upon the events which were to come. They felt they had been plunged into conditions too momentous for them.

In the darkened street the Peyton house flared insolent defiance at Stryne and his followers. Strains of music from the orchestra reached the ears of the assembly. Stryne ceased talking, stopped, regarded the outlook, then opened the heavy gate and went inside.

When he stood before them on the property of the

only aristocrat among all the magnates of Nob Hill as far as the eye could reach the people applauded. They partook of his audacity and leaped, shouting: "The Chinese must go!" "If not by the ballot then the bullet!" As he entered the enemy's territory their enthusiasm became unconfined. They felt that their leader had elevated them.

These maddened cries sent the blood from the cheeks and stopped the throbbing hearts of the men and women in the black towering houses. From the Peytons' home came the music of a waltz.

Stryne began to speak when McCarthy, a carpenter, stepped from the crowd and said, "There ain't no bonfire to night, Mr. Stryne. We haven't got no wood. In the next block is some lumber that Pickens is using for his new house. Shall we take it?"

"We must have a fire, McCarthy, but we ought not to steal from Pickens. He is honest, is he not? He never stole lumber. Pickens took a railroad."

"Shall we take the wood, Mr. Stryne?" insisted the carpenter.

"McCarthy, we must have a fire."

These words were no sooner uttered than the men fetched the lumber and the corner of the Peytons' lawn, where Stryne took his station as speaker, was soon aglare. There was not a break in the music within. The women of the Walsinghams and Hack-

etts begged their kinsmen to be allowed to depart before a general conflagration commenced.

"What is the use of our guards? It does us no good if a few beggars are murdered after we are all roasted into crisps. Let us go anywhere and not stay in these houses any longer," they wailed.

By way of beginning his speech Stryne exclaimed, a smile of mockery rendering his countenance unpleasant: "Men and women: Last night we were locked out. That is why we are here. I approve of our meeting on this spot. It makes this highwayman Peyton, who is dancing the dance of death in his mansion, realize that the working men of San Francisco are a living body with blood as red and thick as his. Pickens and Walsingham skulking in the darkness know we are here to tell them that they must obey the laws of their country. It is not so many years ago that they were working men like ourselves. Let us prick their memory. I know no better way than to show them ten thousand of us who stand together and are ready to sacrifice our bodies for justice if justice make that demand."

Stryne continued his speech for half an hour, threw off his cape, and cast aside his coat. Gradually he moved up the stone walk leading to the house, forced back by the people who surged about him. At last he was on the broad, granite steps and the mob broke

into cheers. The music played on. Only the Peytons and Stryne seemed unconscious of the fact that he had made a stage of the Peyton porch. Expectancy had reached a terrible point.

The socialist's voice was especially adapted to the oratory of open spaces, and he strung the great irregular throng to whichever chord he chose.

By way of closing his speech and making a farewell pleasantry he said, "My friends, I have withheld from you one reason why I asked you all to assemble here to-night. The working men have no club in this ward. We shall organize one this evening. I appoint as president Knox Peyton, president of the Central Pacific; vice-president, Thomas Walsingham, owner of the El Dorado; secretary, John Pickens, who for twenty years has had a monopoly of the brandy sold in the State. What shall we do for a treasurer? Is there an honest man in this ward? To be sure, there is McCarthy, the carpenter. For treasurer, Michael McCarthy."

Rare badinage is almost as effective as wit. Stryne was no exception among powerful men. People laughed immoderately at his jokes. This one especially delighted them.

They were howling their loud approval when the music within the Peytons' house ceased. The heavy

door was swayed open by a butler and in the entrance stood a woman about twenty-one.

The light fell full upon her and showed her hair, gold, like that of childhood, rolling back from her brow in a great wave, and falling in curls which sheathed her bare, white shoulders. She stood with her long train thrown over her right arm, quite calmly looking at the fire, the thousands of strange faces, and Stryne. Her tall, lithe, full, young form was robed in a princesse gown of heavy white silk, untrimmed but for bands of lace. The young woman's chin was held high, and her red, fruitlike lips curved into a smile. Her blue eyes were full like her cheeks and her neck.

Often the mob had watched her in her carriage, or on her horse, or walking with her father, Colonel Peyton, a tall, white-haired, erect man, with a flowing mustache and closely cropped side-whiskers. They had never seen her so resplendent, and there was a hush. She more than any other woman in the city was the daughter of San Francisco, Theodosia Peyton. As a child she had been known for her beauty and gentle nature. Many had watched her as she rode her first pony. Her traps were a common topic of conversation. There were few tradesmen, dressmakers, or servants in the city who did not feel an affection for her, or had not been touched by the charm

of her cordiality. She never forgot a face and she was known to all as Theodosia. The highly and lowly placed read every line that the newspapers published about her frocks, entertainments, accomplishments, and rumored engagements. She often said that she should be obliged to be married in the park, or on the ocean beach, for no church could contain all the people who would expect to be invited to her wedding.

Stryne looked at her, waiting for her to speak. Evidently she was not yet ready. The agitator hastily covered his shoulders with his heavy cape, an apology for being coatless. When he did this he drew himself up like a military man. There was something both in his manner and act which vexed his followers.

For a moment he was far away from them, living in another sphere, Theodosia Peyton's world. They felt that he was merely a gentleman pretending to be a working man. Moreover, he had removed his coat intentionally in the presence of their womenkind. It was not a little galling that he should don it for the daughter of their enemy, Colonel Peyton, who had shares in all the big corporations of the Pacific coast.

Stryne dared not leave the porch, dared not beat a retreat, vanquished by a handsome woman who merely looked at him. The eyes of ten thousand people

were upon him as he bowed to Theodosia courteously and with dignity. He had expected to be stoned or shot, but this girl was an unlooked-for missile. He understood why the music had been uninterrupted. The house was garrisoned by the woman before him.

The socialist's interrupted vehemence had brought the glow to his cheeks and eyes. His wiry, dark hair was disordered. Stryne's face was aflame with the passion of his eloquence. In spite of the irregularity of his massive features, wrapped in his great cloak at that moment he looked like a handsome young army officer ardent with the fury of battle.

During the silence Stryne dropped his eyes rather than stare at the strange woman. In so doing they fell upon a small black patch on Theodosia's collar bone, unnecessarily calling attention to the fairness of her shoulders. Not twenty seconds passed thus, but they dragged heavily to the agitator. The pulses of his temples and wrists throbbed with thuds. If he was to be held in that position much longer he felt that even the most fervid Strynite would hoot at him.

Finally Theodosia inclined her head graciously, a trifle to one side, without bending her neck. Her eyes were quizzical and triumphant.

Then she said, "I am speaking to Mr. Stryne, I believe?"

Stryne saluted again with the deference which a European social training gives.

"Mr. Stryne, I am Miss Peyton; and I wish to thank you for doing my father the honor to appoint him the president of your club, altho he would prefer to be treasurer."

The socialist reddened.

"Oh, your voice is very penetrating, Mr. Stryne. We could hear quite distinctly. I am positive you are mistaken. You really do not think Colonel Peyton would embezzle the funds of the Working Men's Club? Since you made my father president of your club you will surely come in to have coffee with one of your officers. We are just finishing dinner. Bring any of your friends you choose. I am sorry our house is too small to ask them all, but you have *so* many friends."

Stryne bowed again and answered: "You are most kind, madam. I thank you, but I have a previous engagement with those friends."

"Colonel Peyton will be so sorry. Another time, perhaps. Any time, Mr. Stryne."

"Again, madam, you are most gracious, but I have an engagement for life with my friends."

The girl smiled automatically, bowed to Stryne, and was lost in the shadows of the great hall, as the doors closed upon his first glimpse of her home.

Her voice was so low and the words were so softly spoken that none but Stryne had heard what she said. Directly that Miss Peyton disappeared from view there was a clamor of query, "Why did she come?" "Did she order us away?" they laughed. "What did she say?"

"My friends, I was insulted by the offer of a bribe."

Walsingham, Pickens, or Belden would have offered him railway shares and he would have gladly refused them. They were materialists of common fiber. Peyton sent him youth, white shoulders, bare arms, laughing eyes, red lips, and curls of gold, dimpled hands, bearing a cup of coffee. It was the bribe of a man who had used only his brain. It was the bribe of an aristocrat. It was the bribe of a man who understood men.

Chapter IV

THE PRINCE

THEODOSIA PEYTON was welcomed in the drawing-room like a heroine who had saved a besieged city. Within fifteen minutes the crowd dispersed, and the Beldens, Walsinghams, and Pickenses, looking at their guns and police, felt slightly ashamed. There were a dozen guests at Colonel Peyton's house and the women embraced Theodosia hysterically. The old men patted her cheeks. Her father pressed his lips to her hair.

Lieutenant Armstrong, of the navy, told her she was a splendid officer, and that he was glad to see her come back from death smiling.

Percy Oglethorpe, a blond young Englishman, gave her both his hands and said: "By Jove, Miss Peyton, you make us men feel like curs and cowards. Why didn't you tell us your plan of breaking up the meeting? We should all have been at your service. The States are a great development after all. The American women are wonderful—regular Joans of Arc. I'll write that home to England."

"Pardon, Signor Oglethorpe, but you would say, would you not, that the American woman, Signorina Peyton, is *the* Joan of Arc?" slowly corrected Prince Alessandro Ruspoli, an Italian nobleman, who was making a tour of the world and staying in San Francisco for the time.

Then the Prince stepped toward Theodosia, and looking steadily into her eyes from the depth of his own gaze, took her hand and said, "My compliments, Signorina. You are most unkind to take from me the privilege of being your escort."

"Oh, if you had gone it would have spoiled all. I knew I must be alone," she answered.

He bent over her hand until about to touch it with his lips, and she turned quickly to leave him. The Italian, with one step, was in front of her, and he said softly in his own language, "Signorina, you will not accept the courtesy which, in my own country, I might bestow upon any lady of my acquaintance."

Ruspoli was much taller than Theodosia, erect but slight in form. His shoulders were broad and his frame was lean. The Prince's nose and chin were clearly and well outlined. He was so dark that he might have been a Turk, and his black eyes made one think they had burnt until they were dead. His hair was glossy, jetty, and brushed straight back from his low brow. All the blood in his face was concentra-

ted in his firm full lips, which had the appearance of being tinted red. They parted as he awaited an answer from Theodosia.

"I am American, Prince, and I decline Italian courtesies," laughed Theodosia, endeavoring to pass him.

Ruspoli's eyes were so serious that he almost frowned. His arms were folded and he asked, "Why, Signorina, did you refuse such a trifle?"

Miss Peyton replied in Italian, "That is very simple—because you desired it."

"Why did I desire it, Signorina?" insisted Ruspoli, showing his white teeth and staring into her blue eyes until her cheeks grew pink.

"Oh, I decline to be questioned, Prince," said Theodosia, pouting her lips, shrugging her shoulders, and tossing her curls.

The Italian barricaded the way, and said rapidly in one breath, "I will tell you, Signorina."

"I don't hear, Prince; I refuse to hear. I am deaf."

Theodosia endeavored to flee.

"You shall hear, Signorina; I will tell you what you know very well. You refused because I love you, Signorina. For that reason I am treated as an enemy."

Theodosia straightened herself up with grave dig-

nity, altho there was a smile in her eyes. Ruspoli listened tragically and gloomily, his expression intent and eager.

"Now, Prince, I see it. You are going to spoil everything. I thought we were to be such good friends. Don't be dull. I shall banish you to Italy if you are."

At that instant Percy Oglethorpe joined Theodosia and said: "Talk about smokeless powder, Miss Peyton, it's all nonsense. I shall recommend you to the War Department. A rebellion put down with a smile. Ruspoli, you are thinking poetry. I see it. Write a sonnet about Miss Peyton, who put down a rebellion with a smile."

"The Prince write a poem, Mr. Oglethorpe? Oh, he doesn't live up to his eyes. He does nothing but talk. He is a Strynite," laughed Theodosia.

Ruspoli endeavored to be civil, but he found it too difficult when interrupted in a tender declaration by a frivolous, jesting Englishman. He merely bit the inside of his upper lip with his strong, white teeth.

The guests were assembled in a long, Oriental drawing-room, and some of the ladies approached the group. One was Adele Whiting, a tall, well-groomed girl, somewhere in the twenties—none but Adele knew just where.

Like all fashionable women of the period, Miss

Whiting wore her hair high on her head and in long curls at the back, but her ringlets were false, stiff, and dark, while Theodosia Peyton's were her own, soft and thick.

Adele was a nondescript, eyebrowless young woman, indefinite in color and outline. She was of good stature and, while at a distance she gave the impression of being handsome, as she approached her charm vanished. Without marked imperfections she was singularly devoid of any pretty feature. Miss Whiting was impoverished, but of a good New York family. She had sat through more dinners without giving any herself than any person of her years in the city. Wherever the sun was shining its brightest and best Adele could be found. There was no better index of one's social favor than the frequency or rarity of her visits.

She knew every rock and shoal of society and she was never caught in the quicksand. Adele called herself Theodosia's chum. She held the same position to several other prominent and wealthy women. It meant that she was willing to be anything from a messenger to a maid. In the kindest way she accepted invitations at the last moment when guests had disappointed and there was a vacant place at dinner—that is, if you were worth while. Her recompense was that she was considered popular.

In those days the chaperon was scarcely known in America, and San Francisco thought her merely the exquisite humor of the comic New York weeklies. The San Francisco maiden, who at present is the most chaperoned girl in the United States, during the seventies went everywhere alone with the utmost freedom. But Theodosia found Adele convenient when she wanted to walk or drive with Ruspoli, or any one of half a dozen other dangerous men she knew. It was like being with a well-trained servant —alone—and yet Ruspoli was held in check. In reality Theodosia had no chum but her father. When she was a small girl he led her by the hand, but as she grew she led Colonel Peyton.

Adele joined the group and said: "Theo darling, if it hadn't been for you I am sure we should all be in ashes. I don't want to be cremated even after I am dead. Weren't you dreadfully frightened? Dear me, I'm quite giddy at the thought of it. You are such a brave girl I must kiss you again."

Sally Livingston was making two or three people laugh by saying: "Ten thousand men frighten Theodosia Peyton? Indeed no. She is perfectly happy. It is the first time she ever had men enough looking at her at once."

Sally was thin, gray-complexioned, wore her hair drawn tightly from her forehead, and was inclined to

protuberance of chin. She was liked for the curious reason that she always told the truth if it was disagreeable. Each of her friends fancied that she was the one elected to escape Sally's tongue.

Jessie Traver protested: "Sally, I have a standing rule not to make nasty remarks until I get home. I have heard you say the most horrid things while dinner was going on—Theo, dear, you are a darling. I do admire your courage. But weren't you a bit frightened?"

"Of course not, Jessie, I rather liked it."

"Liked it, Miss Peyton?" said Oglethorpe.

"Liked it, Theodosia?" exclaimed Colonel Peyton.

"Really!" remarked Lieutenant Armstrong.

"Liked it, Theo?" Adele ejaculated.

"Yes, I think I should enjoy that sort of thing myself."

"Theodosia, you are posing," said Sally Livingston.

"Miss Peyton, you are chaffing us," declared Oglethorpe.

"May I ask, Signorina, what you mean by 'that sort of thing?'" requested the Prince.

"Why, I should like to be Stryne," answered Theodosia.

"I understand, Signorina, that nearly everything in America is a joke. This also is a pleasantry?"

"Of course not. I should like to be Stryne, to be able to have thousands of men willing to die for me."

"Thousands of men are willing to die for you, Miss Peyton."

"I was sure you would say that, Percy Oglethorpe; I never knew you to fail to make the obvious conventional compliment—as I was saying, I should like to be Mr. Stryne and do things."

"Is Mr. Stryne so very handsome, Theodosia?" asked Sally Livingston.

"It's just what I wanted to know," remarked Lieutenant Armstrong.

"Not a pretty or beautiful man, but strong and handsome," said Miss Peyton slowly. Then, looking quickly at the Italian, she added, "And I quite like him."

When her eyes met those of her father they were smiling. Colonel Peyton continued his conversation with the older members of the group. Ruspoli walked toward her and asked: "Signorina, does the gentleman's beautiful face or do the crimes he instigates please you? It is always interesting to learn the tastes of ladies in strange lands."

"Do you know that Mr. Stryne causes crime, Prince?" asked Miss Peyton coldly.

"I was speaking of his class," said Ruspoli, as the conversation went on in his own language.

"And I was talking of Mr. Stryne."

"I feel that I know something of these men, Signorina. I regret to say that my passionate, unreasoning Italy is the mother of most of them. My dear cousin, the King, has just escaped death at the hands of your hero's friends. A socialist can not be separated from his class, and so I know Signor Stryne."

"Mr. Stryne stands quite alone, Prince," answered Theodosia, crossing her hands behind her and looking up at him smiling. She was talking merely for the sake of having the last word, and his harshness surprised and amused her. Since he had told her a few minutes before that he loved her, Theodosia was seized with an impish desire to tease Ruspoli who previously had been gentle unto indolence.

The Prince bowed and replied: "Signorina, we heard Signor Stryne this evening saying, 'If not the ballot, then the bullet.' Oh, I know his kind! None of them hesitates about crime if he can advance his cause by it. Tell me, what must I do? Shall I, too, be a murderer to inspire your enthusiasm, Signorina? If that is necessary, I have already chosen the man to kill."

The Prince was sneering and his lips were trembling. He was looking unpleasantly at Theodosia. His anger had caused her to forget to dissect his emotions.

Theodosia asked: "So you would like to know the sort of a man who appeals to my enthusiasm? He is not a parasite. He is not an idler. He is not a barnacle. He is not a pretty man."

Ruspoli's countenance grew pale and his eyes darkened.

"I've told you what he can not be. Now I shall tell you what he is: charming, strong, able, intellectual, and something of a hero."

The Prince laughed aloud, "*Dio mio!* Is Stryne a hero?"

"Experience has taught me that you can not expect a parasite to appreciate a man. I as well as you, Prince, belong to the lazy class. My kin are from the South. We were idlers in England two centuries ago, and we came to the colonies to make sure that none of our descendants should be obliged to work. An affair called the Civil War spoiled our plans. Nevertheless by heredity I am just as lazy as you are. Yet I can look at all views of the question. There is more right than wrong on Stryne's side. Chinamen will ruin laborers and spoil the race eventually. They ought not to be here, for a nation is no stronger than its poorest classes. We are all bandits. He is working for the good of the poor and is a hero. I believe everything he says. I'm going to send him my ruby rings and tell him to give

them to the poor. Think of it! Ten thousand men ready to fight and die for him, and three months ago they never heard of him. Isn't that splendid?"

"No, dearest lady, it is merely popular insanity. The public always recovers. Stryne himself will cure them. They are, like you, carried away by youth and enthusiasm."

"Youth, youth, Prince! I am twenty-one."

"I said youth."

"I am older than you are; for any woman is five years older than a man of her age."

"*Si*, Signorina, but I am twenty-seven."

"Yes, but I am an American, and in the United States we live and know more in a month than you do in Italy in a lifetime, and so I am at least thirty, fully three years older than you." Theodosia felt victorious.

Ruspoli smiled. "Dearest lady, I can not permit so many generalities. I grant everything you say about yourself. You know more than I or any European, or any one except, perhaps, Signor Stryne, can hope to know. Yet I can not think all Americans are as wise as you. You are just a trifle enthusiastic, just a trifle fantastic."

"O dear, no! That shows you don't understand me at all. How can the old civilization understand the new? My predominating qualities are logic and

common sense. When I see a great man I recognize him, and you close your eyes, I am going to know Mr. Stryne. Perhaps he will refuse. He did refuse, you know."

"And he did quite right I see, Signorina."

"Indeed!"

"When I saw you last summer at Santa Cruz I, too, should have been indifferent, Signorina. Nothing but imbecility made me follow you three days that Consul Roma might present me. I met every woman in Santa Cruz that I did not wish to know. It seemed as tho I was always just missing you. Had I forced you to want to know me, and then had I declined, what would you have done?"

"Why, Prince, you never would have had the opportunity to refuse. Only men like Mr. Stryne ever do. So all that is a waste of imagination. Ah, I think I will give a little dinner for him, and I'll ask you——"

"Signorina, out of respect to my cousin, the King of Italy, I must decline."

"I shall ask you, Prince, and whom else? Oh, Adele Whiting."

"Signorina, I beg ten thousand pardons, but my honor does not allow me to meet a man of that sort."

"Prince, if you refuse again, I shall not allow you

even to sit at my left. Oh, Percy Oglethorpe! He makes two."

"Dearest lady, great as is my respect, my admiration, I can not see you so abase yourself as to meet an outcast, an adventurer like this fellow. I can not countenance it. I can not come."

"Now, Prince, you are to sit by Sally Livingston, the ugliest girl I know. She is awfully amusing in English, but she speaks neither French nor Italian. That is your penalty. Lieutenant Armstrong will make four."

"Colonel Peyton, I appeal to you as a wise parent. Miss Peyton in her inexperience and enthusiasm talks of giving a dinner in honor of this Stryne, this socialist. Can you not argue with her?" asked Ruspoli in slow, studied English.

"Prince, agree with Theodosia. Encourage her. This is only an impulse. To-morrow she will have forgotten it. Women and lunatics are managed in the same way. Theodosia can persuade me to nearly anything. It is a luxury I allow myself, yielding to her. There never was a dearer, kinder, gentler, sweeter woman than Theodosia. I like all these quixotic impulses of hers. They show what a lovable nature she has if only you understand her, but I never think of endeavoring to dissuade or persuade the girl."

"Signorina, *carissima Signorina*, when you tell me that you will know this canaille——"

"My dear Prince, but you must stop abuse."

"This Signor Stryne, then, pardon. You hurt me. You madden me. My vision is black. Must I become an Egalité and vote for the death of my cousin? Because of thee, I must salute this man. *Buona sera*, Signorina, beautiful Signorina."

The Prince bent over Theodosia's hand until his breath warmed its flesh. Then he slowly raised his head and looked at her as tho dazed.

"What must I accomplish? Is it necessary for me, as you say, to 'do things'? Must I, too, kill some one?"

"You have already said 'good-night,' Prince Ruspoli," said Theodosia as she left him to talk with her other guests.

Chapter V

THE ARREST OF STRYNE

TO every one but the leader himself the Nob Hill meeting was the greatest success of his agitation in San Francisco. His followers, his admirers, and his enemies applauded his daring and audacity.

As Stryne left the steps of the Peyton residence that night, he despairingly ordered a lieutenant to extinguish the bonfire. He was Achilles, whose heel had been discovered. All others believed he was riding on the flood-tide of fortune, but he felt that the ebb was carrying him back to obscurity.

He doubted himself and that very act alarmed him. What seemed success to others was defeat to him. As his admirers, shouting, followed him even to the steps of the cottage south of Market Street where he lived, he thought, "Good God, to be a failure like a common man, like one of those I lead!" He could not grasp all at once that this destiny was marked out for him.

Yet, like most men who succeed quickly, he was superstitious and a fatalist. To Stryne, who had

ever gloried in his belief in himself, his career, to waver was to fail. Doubt he fought off as a monster devouring him.

No outward change took place in his conduct. It became a fad among the very young, the irresponsible, to attend his sand-lot meetings. His numbers certainly increased each day, and yet, as he walked the streets, as he spoke, he felt that Doubt was lurking in the corners, laughing at him.

She seemed to say: "Go on, build up your house of fame. When I am ready I will cast it down with a look."

Sometimes he fancied that Doubt was playing hide-and-seek with him and she was always a smiling, fair, golden-haired girl who bore Theodosia Peyton's face.

McCann suggested to Stryne that he hold another meeting on Nob Hill since the first was so successful. For answer he looked at the union president several seconds, fearing to find a sneer underneath his words. McCann was evidently sincere in his request, and yet before the socialist's eyes was the sprite Doubt, mocking him.

Stryne could no more compel his men to march up California Street again than he could escape that terrible unbelief in himself.

"No," said he to McCann, "we'll stick by the

sand-lot." So every evening at eight and each Sunday afternoon at two the square was black with men and women listening to the agitator.

Sundays people of all ranks congregated there, and many families included the sand-lot in their weekly drive. Stryne's voice could not reach the thousands, and his lieutenants caught up his words at a distance and sent them on through the air to those who could not hear the leader.

As the capitalists looked at the great congested populace they knew that something was wrong. Four months before, they argued, the people were as contented as the poor and stupid ever will be, but now they were shrieking out their wrongs in the street. Clearly they, the property owners, had not changed. The laboring classes were the same as ever. It was Stryne who altered the scene. He was the evil of whom they must be rid. How?

So long as the socialist was allowed to speak every day on the sand-lot, their advisers said this movement would grow. The meetings must be stopped.

The Legislature was in session. Lobbyists were sent to Sacramento and a bill was passed in both houses and immediately signed by the Governor, which forbade more than three people to hold converse on the street without a permit. Those who disobeyed the new law were called conspirators, and

as such were liable to punishment by imprisonment.

Every one knew that it was a measure passed solely to prevent Stryne's speeches. His men groaned and howled on the sand-lot when they heard that the Governor had signed the bill.

The speaker shouted to them: "Men and women: The bandits of Nob Hill can pass laws. We know that the Legislature is composed of vermin who live upon the dogs of capitalists. It is one thing to make a law and it is another to enforce it."

The following day there were rumors of every description circulating in the city. One had it that Stryne had shot himself rather than surrender to the officers. Another declared that he had left San Francisco. Some people insisted that small boys had found his body near the beach. The only thing of which any one was positive was that warrants had been issued for the arrest of Stryne on the charge of conspiracy and incendiary language. It was also certain that he had left his house south of Market Street.

Somewhat earlier than usual that evening great numbers of Strynites assembled in the Plaza, at that time the center of the town. Undoubtedly many of them were armed, but the police avoided arrests for they were awaiting the leader. The square was filled and swollen with people, while the opulent of

San Francisco were indignant that the mob should be allowed to congregate.

From a distance they viewed the populace and asked: "What is the use of law or officers when they allow a mob to ride over them like that? We might as well have no Legislature. Capitalists will never invest in a State where property is imperiled by rioters."

The Strynites felt that they had the upper hand and became arrogant because the officers of the law arrested none of them. Residents of Nob Hill and the prosperous of San Francisco were certain that Stryne would not appear.

"Oh, he's run away like a cur." "You never saw a one of those socialists who was really game and would fight," were remarks frequently heard from the on-lookers.

Whatever unbelief Stryne felt within himself, his disciples had complete faith and prepared a rostrum for him. Two horse-cars were stopped and made ready for his appearance. The crowd howled for him, but his followers were silent. None knew where their leader might be found, but they were annoyed by the hoots of unsympathetic strangers. It was past eight o'clock.

There were few people on Clay Street between Montgomery and Kearny streets when a small ragged

boy saw Stryne's broad shoulders moving with deliberation toward the assembly. The voice squeaked, "There comes Stryne!"

The pulse of the audience gave a quick throb, and every man, woman, and child screamed with delight. Never had there been such tenderness, adoration, and triumph in their cheers. Their throaty, raucous cries growled exultation at the doubters.

Stryne was wearing his heavy blue cloak as usual. It seemed that he had not varied an inch from his routine costume. Armed men ten deep, hugging and embracing him, closed in around him and escorted him to where he was to speak. The officers stood aside until he mounted the street-car.

When he showed himself in full view of the people and heard their rapturous cries, he trembled and tears came into his eyes. It was impossible for him to speak. Vainly he spread out his arms to silence his friends. It was but the beginning of more cheers and shouts.

These people had so stretched themselves up to the point of hysteria that tears or laughter came at a word. The moment had arrived in the passion they felt for Stryne that sacrifice of self for the agitator was the thing to be prayed for. Their hearts united and begged as the supremest joy that he demand their bodies and souls. There was not

a doubter present to say he was unmoved by the spectacle.

Yet Stryne realized that it was inartistic to weep at a scene which he had planned for twenty-four hours. It was for this very situation that he remained in hiding during the day. If he must go to prison, he would not be dragged to a cell like a wrong-doer, but he determined to stand in the brilliant glare of his glory and defy the officers, the law, and the State to magnify it by tearing him away from it. If he was to go, every being who had followed him, drunk in his words, and felt the frenzy of his invective during these months, must see the blood of his wounds and listen to the defiance of his soul.

There was a pause in the applause. During the silence the thought uppermost in the minds of all was, would the officers dare carry out the orders of their chief? There was none present but felt that event meant the beginning of a long reign of bloodshed. They believed that it was a spark to set ablaze the homes of the wealthy. This silence of Stryne's was intentional and a test of the courage of the other side. No officer of the police moved, and the Strynites exulted. They embraced each other, danced, and yelled: "The Chinese must go! Whatever happens, the Chinese must go! If not by the ballot, then by the bullet. *Ah-h-h!*"

Clearly the police had faltered, but a thick-necked, broad-shouldered captain, from whose eyes fearlessness calmly gazed, stepped forward, surrounded by a crowd of men. The captain and Stryne stared at one another. The agitator and the officer realized that each had met his equal.

Every man present regarded Stryne, expecting some violent act. On the contrary, he was impassive. The captain of the police neared him and the socialist merely waited. They expected his hand to move and that he would make an effort to defend himself.

Strynites could not realize that this man, in whom they had seen the lion's passion rage, could like another submit to be taken to prison. It was as impossible as that a divinity should be subjected to earthly laws. His disciples would not have been surprised had Stryne's apotheosis taken place at that moment.

He waited tranquilly for the officer to clamber up the side of the street-car and make himself slightly ridiculous in doing so. The captain said, giving him his full name to add a touch to the dramatic scene, "Paul Stryne, I have a warrant for your arrest."

It was not until Stryne bowed and prepared to yield that the people became aware of his intention. Then the rage of his admirers burst forth in hoots,

menaces, cries of agony, and hurling of rocks. In an instant a dozen burly, strong laborers were on the car with unsightly knives flashing and threatening the officers. Stryne's hands were bound.

The situation had arrived which the thoughtful feared. It needed but a word from the leader and rioting must begin. Instead, he called out in grave, deep tones, which he knew so well would vibrate the chords of their souls.

"What, men, do I see my friends, working men, attack an officer of the law? We, the working men of San Francisco, are to be the rulers of the city. It is our mission to make laws, not to break them."

Slowly the Strynites released their hold upon the captain of police. Knives were reluctantly placed in their belts and revolvers were sullenly returned to their pockets.

"I have appeared before you, men and women, once more, because I wanted to look into your faces again before truth imprisons me. You must listen because I am going to say what the calm wisdom of your manhood has already told you.

"Commit no violence, injure no life, destroy no property. Give none of our enemies an excuse for saying that we deserve imprisonment. How many are going to make this promise which concerns you—each man, woman, and child of you? Ah, I am glad

that the working men of San Francisco always have their wits about them.

"Then I charge you not to lose heart. The city can not build walls so thick that my voice will not pierce them. You can not imprison justice. You can not lock up honesty. The Constitution forbids it. Keep that in mind and be patient. While I inhabit my cell in that big stone building because I wept for the hungry, because I lifted up my voice for the weak, because I fought for right down-trodden, remember every minute of my time is to be passed in work for you.

"Our success is as certain as my persecution. Imprisonment of the body is nothing; I have slept on stone before. In my cell I shall not envy the men on Nob Hill who are sending me there the possession of their downy beds. I have a clear conscience. If my incarceration can help you I thank God for it.

"As for gratitude to you for your honesty, your manhood, your loyalty to yourselves and to me, friends, how can I speak of it? Some ties are too sacred for the profanation of words. You know what I am to you and God sees what you are to me.

"Again before we separate, our oath: 'Whatever happens, the Chinese must go!'"

Ten thousand hands were raised and the vow spread upward to the sky.

Then Stryne closed his cape, donned his hat and said, "Now, Mr. Officer, I am your prisoner."

As the leader passed through the crowd, the men touched his cloak, pressed his hand, the tears streamed down their cheeks. Some of the more impetuous stood with their hands on their hip pockets. Stryne shook his head and patted their backs. Boys embraced him and went to hide in their sobbing mothers' arms. It was like the funeral of a great man. They followed him up the street, and as the prison door closed upon him, a wail of anguish reverberated in the serene, silent night of the city.

Chapter VI

THEODOSIA'S SIX-IN-HAND

FROM the beginning of their residence in San Francisco, Colonel and Mrs. Peyton occupied a distinctive position. Knox Peyton was educated at the University of Virginia. Later he became a lawyer and brought his young wife to California.

Mrs. Peyton was a handsome, vivacious, imperious woman to whose sway society readily submitted because she was Theodosia Custis of Virginia, educated in Paris, married to a Peyton, possessed of a goodly fortune, and would have moved to the South Sea Islands or another unlikely spot rather than abdicate a jot of her right to reign in any place where she might reside.

Mrs. Peyton instructed early San Francisco society in the gentler arts of civilization. Society accepted her as a tutor because it was certain that she was "somebody at home." There was some doubt about many of the others. Several Southern women had achieved certain renown from tales of their fortunes lost during the war, but Mrs. Peyton placidly hurled

them from their pedestal by declaring that "Undoubtedly they were most respectable people, but she had never heard of them."

Many a heart stopped beating from fear lest Mrs. Peyton had never heard of them. Not to be heard of by Mrs. Peyton meant social decline. To be called "a nobody and an upstart" by Mrs. Peyton meant ostracism.

Knox Peyton became an attorney for corporations. Soon he acquired large mining interests. His fortune grew and with it Mrs. Peyton's arrogance. She would not have admitted it, for it was a pose of hers to deplore her husband's wealth.

However, Mrs. Peyton was sufficiently sincere in her remorse for his sins against her code of a gentleman to aid him in sending vast sums back into general circulation. The Peyton dinners, balls, receptions, and theater parties are still discussed in San Francisco. They illustrated Mrs. Peyton's theory that, while a gentleman might possibly by accident earn money, it was beneath him to keep it.

Mrs. Peyton had the most philanthropic motive in entertaining, for she felt it her duty as a conscientious member of Grace Church to give San Francisco society some idea of how things should be done. It pleased her to observe that society endeavored to

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imitate her and make itself supportable to her delicate nerves.

The Peytons traveled extensively. The Peytons spoke modern languages. The Peytons had the first liveried servants in San Francisco. The Peytons had the first private carriages in San Francisco. The Peytons brought from abroad the newest models of modes. The Peytons were on the visiting-list of more or less important nobility of several countries in Europe.

Her aunt, Mrs. Peyton never forgot to remind Mr. Peyton, Theodosia, and society, was the Lady Somerset of England.

Theodosia grew to be the prettiest girl in San Francisco, at least in society. She had all her father's good nature, gaiety, charm of manner, and none of her mother's arrogance. Just when Mrs. Peyton was thinking of taking Theodosia abroad to be presented at European courts by Lady Somerset, she died, and the girl made her début in San Francisco.

Straightway she became the head of her father's brownstone house on California Street, and routed all the widows and elderly maidens who designed to take him from her. Colonel Peyton was not an old man and the blood of the South was in his veins. He could not see loveliness without desiring it.

Theodosia called herself his chaperon and prevented any undesirable entanglements.

When she was nineteen people commented upon the maturity of her manner. Her explanation was, "A girl does grow old bringing up a father, as I have done for years."

By the time Theodosia became a woman, the Peytons had entertained every American or foreigner of distinction who had visited the city. Travelers went to their house instead of hotels, and some of them were penurious enough to count in advance upon no hotel bill while in the city. Consequently San Franciscans in any part of the globe were first asked, "Do you know the Peytons?" One Englishman said, "California. Oh, yes. That is where the Peytons live."

After Mrs. Peyton's death, Theodosia did not demand but accepted as a heritage her mother's position. Without endeavoring to protest, every one yielded to her rule. Women much older than she paid her deference exacted by her mother. Theodosia found life a very agreeable existence, and wondered why people could weep or be angry, except, of course, girls whose fathers suggest stepmothers.

At nineteen Theodosia sang with a high, pure soprano voice, played the piano brilliantly, read

superficially most books worth while, and spoke several languages.

She had run the gamut of flirtation and was reputed to be able to "drive a six-in-hand almost as well as six horses in the mountains." This meant that she could conduct some stage of a flirtation with half a dozen men at a time. In fact, she preferred that number, for she realized the perils of one. It might be the mildest form of friendship, but eventually the man was certain to look things, and then to say them. Sentiment always resulted and pleasure was spoiled. Two men were almost as bad. She found four quite as difficult to manage as six, and considerably less exciting. Six was a game worth playing.

Theodosia had finished her knowledge of the French language by a flirtation with a lieutenant of the French navy whose ship was in port. His fiancée was in Paris and Theodosia really intended nothing but friendship and a serious study of French literature. So long as there was a fiancée in Paris Theodosia was not alarmed. How could there be anything but friendship when a man has just left a woman he is to marry? Then French literature is certainly the opposition to flirtation.

She had done all within her power to prevent the result, and so one should not blame her that she was

astonished, quite amazed when the Frenchman told her that he hated literature, that he only pretended to like it to be near her, that he loved her and intended to abandon his fiancée. Theodosia was afraid she could find no honest men.

On another occasion, when she had the most laudable desire to study the history of the Catholic Church, she also met with disheartening results. She always possessed an interest in the wonderful institution, but the common, serf-like countenances of the Irish peasant priests offended her artistic sense which demanded beauty for her eyes. Besides she felt it would be a reflection upon her intelligence to attend church with servants.

So when a handsome, dark-eyed, pale-faced Spanish priest came to San Francisco, she concluded that it would be interesting to learn from him the history of his church. Certainly there could be no better opportunity for improving her Spanish accent. The *padre* rejoiced greatly over his prospect of proselyting so influential a young woman as Theodosia Peyton.

After several weeks of calls at his study, and bending over big mysterious books together and many personal conversations, Theodosia gave him this decision:

"I will become a Catholic, Father, if you will not

ask me to believe all your rubbish; if I am never expected to go to church with those horrid, stupid, ordinary domestics; if I may always hear you preach, and if I may always confess to you, and then as little as I please."

Theodosia was quite right in believing that a priest should have no sex. Undoubtedly she should have had the privilege of a frank avowal. It was the duty of the *padre* to view it impersonally.

Yet that night she awoke to find a basket of crimson roses passed through a window into her room. A moan came from the ground below. The young priest was lying prostrate, for the ladder on which he mounted had fallen in his descent.

Colonel Peyton was given Theodosia's entire confidence. "I assure you, papa, it was not my fault. I was so particular that it couldn't be my fault. Why, I was almost serious and solemn. So was the *padre*. I was determined that if anything came of it—of course, I realized there might be some little danger, men are so silly, you know—he could never say I was to blame. Now, tell me, papa, it was not my fault, was it? Say you believe in me or I shall not sleep."

Colonel Peyton shook his head. "Theodosia, it was your fault, but you can not help it. This was merely a new sort of a flirtation—religious."

The *padre* was conveyed to his home, and Colonel Peyton called upon the Archbishop. In another church there might have been gossip, but in the well-regulated Catholic institution the young man was merely sent into the interior of Alaska for discipline. In his sagacious middle age he was made a bishop.

Soon afterward, while Theodosia was in New York, she admitted that she was conducting a flirtation with the German consul-general. The others she had called literature and religion, but her honesty forced her to designate this by its own name.

The girl explained to her father when Colonel Peyton objected: "Don't moralize, papa, I am going to San Francisco in three weeks. Then it will be all over. You know it is dreadful enough to live there, so don't deprive me of amusement."

"Theodosia," replied Colonel Peyton, "when have I opposed your amusement? But I object to this wasting of your time and character. What sort of a wife are you going to be? You will never be able to fix upon one man. You are not serious with Von Sternberg. Flirtation is as unwholesome for the heart as stimulants are for the body."

"Papa, I don't want a homily on flirtation, because you are such a dear, good man that you are not capable of giving it. Now I could instruct you. Tell

me, dear old boy, don't you really think that we women who are exiled three thousand miles from anything that is worth living for, and six thousand miles from all that is worth living for, ought to have a little recreation? You yourself admit that my German is greatly improved."

Colonel Peyton looked at his daughter and asked: "Theodosia, is it possible that you have studied these various languages to have a novelty in love-making, new methods, as it were?"

Theodosia's voice gurgled into laughter, and putting her arms about her parent's neck, she said: "What a wise old boy it is. How did you ever find that out?"

The Peytons returned to their home. Within a short time the German consul-general exchanged his better post in New York for that in San Francisco. When the colonel read it he came with his newspaper in trembling hand, to give the information to Theodosia.

"My daughter," began he—and Theodosia realized from this preface that her father was about to make her uncomfortable—"read that. Von Sternberg is to come to San Francisco. You recollect, my dear, what I told you in New York——"

"I recall every one of your words of wisdom, dearest, but what do they matter now? I am going

to be serious. I am going to be married. My fiancé is Jack Faversham."

"A remittance man, Theodosia."

"John Cecil Percy Faversham, of Faversham Hall, Suffolk, England, papa."

"You don't know him, my child."

"That's the charm of Jack, papa. I don't know him. I hope I never shall. I'm so tired of people I know. I can tell you the number of teeth of every one in San Francisco, which tenth cousin went to the bad, what their incomes are, whose mother worked in a grocery, whose grandmother was a barmaid. The place is so small that every one is dissected until he is as uninteresting as a relative. I like the charm, the mystery of not knowing people. When I meet a new person I feel like a Miss Columbus setting out for the Indies."

"Well enough for conversation in a novel, but not practical, my dear. Men understand each other better than women can know them. I mention this merely to protect you, Theodosia—but Faversham is a drunkard."

"That will give me a mission, papa, dear. I shall reform him."

"Theodosia, do be serious. Listen, do you love Faversham?"

"As much as Von Sternberg, or any of my six-in-

hand. It is not that I care so much for him, but he loves me and I have accepted him."

"Then why, my dear Theodosia, marry him?"

"I tell you papa, in order to be serious, I must have some sort of a purpose. I may seem trivial in conversation, but I am really quite in earnest."

There was to have been a great wedding at Grace Church, a large reception at the Peyton house, and the most beautiful bride of the season. The marriageable women of San Francisco rejoiced for two reasons. The first was that their rival who had so often lightly upset all of their own affairs of the heart was at last to be *hors de combat*, and the match she was making was not enviable. The second was that, with Theodosia out of the way, Colonel Peyton was almost certain to marry again.

From the time of the betrothal until the preparations for the wedding were almost complete, Jack Faversham was intoxicated. Despite the daily protests in the word and glance of Colonel Peyton, Theodosia followed her determination.

Finally, two weeks before the wedding, in the midst of all the prematrimonial festivities in her honor, she sought her father and quite gravely announced: "It is the old story repeated, I go so far and then I balk. I have had a revulsion of feeling. I can not carry out this marriage, and I don't think

I shall ever care enough for any man to abandon my liberty for him. One thing is certain, however, I can not be the wife of a perpetual drunkard. Jack's carousals are getting to be a continuous performance. He would never be sober long enough to hear even my first temperance lecture."

Colonel Peyton was too happy over her sudden and unexpected resolution, and too pleased to keep his daughter with him to reproach her for the unpleasant chatter that would result from her jilting Faversham so near the altar. So he merely said to his daughter:

"It is better for you to say 'No' during the ceremony even, than contract an unhappy marriage, Theodosia. I am sure you will be a good wife for the right man, but if you are only half-possessed, I should be extremely alarmed."

Theodosia's father offered to make the announcement of her change in plans immediately, for he feared lest she might again alter her mind. When he returned from Faversham's hotel, and told her that her former fiancé was quite inebriated, and scarcely realized the meaning of his words, she threw out her arms as if shaking off the last trace of his memory, and said:

"Thank you, dear old boy. You are such a good fellow always to stand up for me, whether I am right

or wrong. Let me give you a kiss. That was a narrow escape, and I am glad the affair is over."

Faversham went for an extended debauch to Honolulu by the next steamer, and the returning mail brought news of his death before his arrival in Hawaii. Immediately every one said, "A broken heart—a woman was his ruin"; but the ship's stewards could have easily set them right.

Theodosia wore black for three months and refused all invitations.

Chapter VII

THEODOSIA AS BONDSMAID

IN every city there are a few persons of whom society asks neither excuses nor explanations; in San Francisco Theodosia was one of these. During her period of mourning, she wore a solemn mien in keeping with her garb, and went often to the Catholic Church, thereby alarming the rector of Grace Church, who gently and vainly protested. She, however, only laughed and rather encouraged the rumor that she might at any time take the veil. Still, when again she wore colors, she went back to her former gay, merry, pleasure-bent self. San Francisco might interpret her in its thousand own ways; she disregarded its existence, and did not seem conscious of the feminine alarm over her reappearance in society. From this time forward the newest philosophy of the mind, soul, theology, or science found Theodosia ready to coquet with it. She took a trip to India to decide for herself if Alibabahula, who claimed to be the Messiah, really was God's mundane representative. Sally Livingston remarked that Theodosia

must have either a man or religion to flirt with. When she returned she brought back an emerald wineglass which he gave her, and the epitaph on the grave of her fad was, "Alababahula had the most glorious eyes in the world."

She knew intimately most of the celebrated men and women of that period. The world smoothed down the prominences of her individuality, leaving her character somewhat arrested in its development.

She met a stately, white-haired leader of the Senate, whom she had long desired to know. "I'm a perfect goose, Senator, a mere autograph album of great people, but you will let me know you, will you not? I warn you I can do nothing but understand and admire you."

The Senator, observing carefully the velvety flush of her cheeks, the blue of her eyes, and the gold of her hair, made her his most courteous bow, and said: "Miss Peyton, it is unnecessary for you to do anything. Your duty is finished since you exist and allow us to see you."

Directly they were the best of friends. They were to wed, all expected, but, instead, she sailed for Japan. Theodosia shied at matrimony, for once she had been badly frightened by it.

On the morning of her twenty-first birthday Theodosia had been alarmed at herself. Several weeks

had passed without an event, book, or individual to attract her. She wondered if she had lived at too great speed and exhausted sensation. Six-in-hands bored her because there were no interesting men or animals to harness. She knew how they all would act.

When admirers made love to her, they no longer pleased her vanity. During the most impassioned scenes she found herself wishing the suppliant would change his tailor, comb his hair differently, or could say "I love you" without turning red.

This was a state of mind which terrorized her. Ennui was to Theodosia, so utterly dependent upon her surroundings, as dyspepsia is to a gourmand or alcoholism to a drunkard. Could it be that the end to amusement had come?

It was Miss Peyton's nature to desire all life's pleasures, to know and feel to the tips of her fingers the fullest measure that beauty, strength, culture, luxury, and art can supply. Theodosia had some doubts about her future existence. Especially she dreaded to be stripped of all her follies, faults, and sins—to become "just a commonplace angel," as she said. So, hugging every one of them to her bosom, she feverishly sought excitement and amusement. Her only fear was that she would be robbed of some pleasure in this life.

One and twenty found Theodosia at the Peyton country home at Santa Cruz with nothing but ennui as far as the horizon stretched. She shuddered.

Presently Prince Alessandro Ruspoli appeared at that resort as the guest of the Italian consul. He was the cousin of King Humbert by the morganatic marriage of the Princess Vittoria of the House of Savoy with Gen. Alessandro Ruspoli. Because the Princess so faithfully and obstinately had awaited the King's consent during many years to wed her soldier lover, Humbert never permitted the Ruspoli descendants to feel that there was a flaw in their birth. While of course barred from succession, at court they had the privileges to which the rank of their mother entitled them, but they were quite dependent upon the humors of their royal cousins.

Theodosia felt that the Prince was the impossible, the unattainable; and in consequence life again wore rose and mauve tints for her. It was the gay summer season at Santa Cruz, and in those days the best and most beautiful of California remained at home instead of passing the time abroad. The Italian met with courteous ceremony the handsome young women who received him with too much effusion.

Theodosia continued her rowing, swimming, and riding, seemingly oblivious that he existed. When Miss Peyton saw a group of friends determined to

present Ruspoli to her, she went in the opposite direction. Santa Cruz was treated to a daily hunt for Theodosia. She refused an invitation to luncheon because she knew he was to be a guest. Yet that was a brilliant azure and silver day. Theodosia was merely watching her champagne bubble before she drank it.

At last the Prince vowed that he would leave Santa Cruz. All her friends pleaded with her to meet him, and Theodosia graciously permitted the introduction.

Ruspoli had fixed his day of departure for a week from the time he met Miss Peyton, but one month, two months, three months passed, and still he was to leave the following week. The Peytons returned from Santa Cruz and the Prince assured every one that he would depart within a fortnight, altho the climate of the Golden Gate was most delightful. San Francisco, strangely enough, was like his own land, and it held him enthralled.

Yet society knew why he remained, and Colonel Peyton informed his daughter of his objection to the Italian's presence. Her friends could not understand her folly, because the Prince was necessarily subject to the will of his cousin. In a case in which marriage was so utterly out of the question, the practical, feminine American mind could not com-

prehend why Theodosia wasted her time. As winter wore on she had the new experience of being harshly criticized by the Puritanical tongues of the city. None could comprehend that Theodosia and the Prince were fascinated by their inability to belong to each other.

During those months he would have told a less experienced woman that he loved her, but Theodosia ever bounded away from him when he began. She forbade him to write her letters.

In reality nothing had interested Theodosia so much since her study of the Roman Catholic Church in Spanish. Now she recalled the pleasure she had felt in watching the young priest balance himself on the edge of the precipice, and then for giddiness run back.

Every person was to Theodosia a puzzle and she amused herself with the solution of it. There were ever unusual natures being placed in unexpected circumstances. Here was Prince Alessandro Ruspoli, who had no right to her, following her everywhere, and, by her will and against her will, looking love, sighing love—doing everything but speaking it. There were no rules or comparisons by which she could fancy the result. She never had read the same story before.

Ruspoli called to take tea with her the day after

she learned that Stryne was imprisoned. As he entered the room, his dark eyes glistening in their deep sockets, she wondered if she really cared to know the last chapter. Ruspoli wore the frock-coat of the period which gave him exceedingly broad shoulders and a small waist. His cheeks were colorless, but health was in his eyes and lips. As he bent over her hand, he said by his look, his attitude, all that words could have told her. No man's salutation meant so much.

Ruspoli looked at Theodosia in her silver gauze princesse gown, with her hair as usual in long curls down her back, her eyes shining from the pleasure of his presence. His glance read the wish that they might continue to drift along in their old philandering relation.

He spoke in Italian as he always did when earnest: "No, it can not be like this, Signorina. Now that I have uttered those words, every check on myself has been swept away. It was more than cruel of you to force me to wait these long days to talk with you. Ah, but you could not prevent me from seeing you. You rode yesterday at ten, Signorina. You drove in the afternoon, wearing a blue gown, a blue hat with a pink rose. You returned at six, Signorina. At five minutes past eleven the lights in your room were turned out. I remained looking

at your window until twelve. Once I saw your shadow on the curtain. When I was positive that you dreamt I went away. Shall I give you a catalog of the other days?"

"No, Prince."

"Have you nothing to say to me, not a word? I waited very long, Signorina."

Ruspoli's eyes approached hers closely and held them prisoners while he spoke. As he awaited an answer Theodosia realized that he was more the master than she. Then she walked quickly to the window, and returned, her face amiably indifferent, the usual Theodosia.

"Yes," said she, with simulated gravity, "I have something to tell you, something important, which will sadden you, I know. My dinner for Mr. Stryne must be postponed."

"Oh, Signorina," groaned Ruspoli.

"It is true, Prince, for he is in jail, put there by us, by you, me, Colonel Peyton, the Walsinghams, the Pickens, all of us bandits of the earth. It's odious, a crying, burning disgrace. To think you can say these frivolous things while that poor fellow is languishing down there in prison. Are you not ashamed of yourself? You ought to be."

"Signorina, I love thee."

"Don't talk to me about love, Prince, when that martyr is in a horrid, moldy, awful cell, suffering, starving, while the rest of us are in comfort. It is a sin."

Percy Oglethorpe had just entered with Adele Whiting. Adele not only wore the misfit clothing of Theodosia, but hoped for her cast-off lovers as well.

"Dear Miss Peyton," drawled Oglethorpe, "pray do not make sentimental statements. Stryne is as jolly comfortable as we are. His cell is fitted with cushions, rugs, flowers. His meals are sent him from the best restaurants. They are really making a hero of him. I dare say the chap is very happy. It is more than he deserves."

"He was always a hero, Percy Oglethorpe."

"Doesn't that depend upon the point of view, Miss Peyton? I dare say, now, Pickens would not agree with you. There is no denying that Stryne made a bonfire of his lumber."

"Of course, and he had a right to it, Mr. Oglethorpe, because Mr. Pickens is a bandit, like you, like me, like the Prince, like Adele, like all of us who have more than we deserve, and then lock up men like Stryne merely because they are trying to put bread in the mouths of the poor. We ought to help him."

Oglethorpe sank into his chair. Ruspoli was in speechless despair.

Adele Whiting exclaimed, "Now, Theo dear, don't call me a bandit. I haven't a cent to my name. I have three good dresses, but I am sure I don't know however I can hope to replace them. I never saw the day yet when I wasn't hard up. In fact I'm a Strynite except that I happen to be in society."

"It really isn't fair of you, Miss Peyton, to class a beggar like me as an oppressor of the poor," argued Percy. "I have reached the point where I never hope to pay any bills, and it keeps me jolly busy destroying them. The confounded tradesmen really oppress me. I think I'll become a corner grocer and send bills to people. As for poor Pickens, how could he help it that his railway stock went up? Should he have given it away? Even if he is dishonest, there is no reason why the lumber of his house should be burned and the palaces of the other Nob Hill 'bandits' left standing. The law doesn't allow it."

"Percy Oglethorpe, what do I care about law? Right is right. If our laws are wrong, let us amend them. Think of us highwaymen daring to pass laws to prevent Mr. Stryne from holding his meetings! What do you think of our governor? What do you think of police so corrupt as to enforce them? In-

cendiary language, indeed! Why don't they arrest me? Haven't I said dreadful things about all of them?"

"They don't arrest you, Theo dear, because you are a beautiful, blue-eyed bandit," answered Adele Whiting.

"That's just it. I am a highwayman. I can do anything I please while that poor fellow, I am sure, is starving in a dark, damp cell," returned Theodosia, swept into soft pity by her own words.

"Must I correct your poetry again, Miss Peyton? Really the fellow is awfully comfortable and jolly happy. I believe he is to leave prison if he can find some one to guarantee bail. Oh, he will get free in a few days, be quite easy on that point; and when he comes out, he will make enough trouble to satisfy even your exacting self."

"You say Mr. Stryne may be released if one pays money, mere money, mere dollars, mere shares and bonds and things like that?" cried Theodosia.

"Yes, if one has enough of them. His bail is fixed rather high. It is a trifle difficult to find a Strynite with a hundred thousand dollars, you know."

"Ah, Adele, Percy, Prince, tell me how much is Con. Virginia worth? What is the Comstock quoted at? I have three hundred and fifty shares and the same of Con. Virginia. Does any one know their

value? Ninety thousand dollars, and I need ten thousand more. My diamonds, my rubies, my rings, ah, heaven bless them! I love them now. They are worth three times that. Now, come along, everybody."

"Whither, Miss Peyton?" asked Oglethorpe.

"I pray, Signorina, where are we going?" interrogated Ruspoli, helplessly.

"Don't you know? There is but one place to go and that is to see Mr. Stryne and be his bondswoman, or bondsmaid, or whatever is the feminine of bondsman," answered Theodosia, greatly surprised at their dulness.

"Wait until to-morrow, I supplicate, Signorina. Talk with Colonel Peyton," advised Ruspoli.

"I couldn't sleep a wink to-night if I did. Come along."

"I will go with you, Theo dear, for you are the maddest darling in the world; but I make one demand, and that is that you don't wear that gauze frock."

"Oh, it is easily arranged, Adele, I will put a long, black wrap over it all. Let us hurry. We will fetch Mr. Stryne back to dinner."

Chapter VIII

THE PRINCE MEETS THE SOCIALIST

THE rescuing party left the Peyton house about six o'clock and walked down California Street to Kearny Street. Ruspoli, according to Theodosia's arrangement, escorted Adele Whiting, while Oglethorpe accompanied her.

"I have the pleasure of going with you, Miss Peyton, not that you care a hang about having me along, but merely to vex the other fellow. Under those circumstances, even, I am grateful," remarked Oglethorpe.

"Percy, you are a nice, sensible boy," said Theodosia. "You are so cheerful. You never have melodramatics, and I am not sure but I like you after all better than any one I know."

"In other words, you are quite indifferent to me, and always will be," said Oglethorpe.

Adele Whiting, who was enraptured because she was able to pick up a crumb of the Prince's attention, approached Theodosia closely from behind and appealed:

"Theo dear, don't carry this practical joke any

farther. It is becoming serious. Ugh! It makes me shiver to think of going near that horrid jail. You really do not mean it, do you?"

Ruspoli added his word of supplication, and Oglethorpe persuaded in unison with the others.

"Very well, you robbers, you highwaymen, all return to your spoils and ill-gotten gains. I go alone, if necessary."

"Not possible, Signorina, believe me."

"Of course, you shall not go alone, Miss Peyton. Not unless we all drop dead this minute," assured Percy.

"Recollect, girlie, we accompany you because we are willing to make geese of ourselves for you, rather than see you do it alone," explained Miss Whiting.

They were very near the jail, which was surrounded by a number of men and women with tear-stained, grief-worn faces.

"I was at the savings-bank bright and early this morning," moaned one old woman, "because I thought my two thousand put with some one else's money would help Mr. Stryne out."

"Me, too," responded her neighbor, Regan, an iron-molder.

"We bailed Mr. Stryne out once, but they put him right back in again, Mrs. Magee, on more charges of conspiracy and incendiary language.

Lawyers kin do anything, lawyers kin. When they burn all the law-books and hang all the lawyers, we may have some laws worth living under. Every charge of conspiracy and incendiary language against Mr. Stryne means ten thousand dollars, and now it costs a triflin' sum of a hundred thousand for him to see the light of day."

"An' I like you to tell me, Mr. Regan," answered the woman, "how we could have a hundred thousand dollars after all our bread has been eat by Chinamen. It is the Walsinghams, the Pickenses, the Peytons that has got it. Let them come down and bail him out." This last sentence, loudly and distinctly uttered, caused bitter laughter.

Theodosia stepped through the crowd hastily and sprang lightly up the steps. The guard quickly admitted the party to the waiting-room. The young girl asked her companions to pass into the officer's apartment, for her intuition warned her that it would be better to see the socialist alone.

She gave her name to the attendant, who repeated it to Stryne. The agitator was pacing up and down his cell. He wore his blue shirt, a bandanna handkerchief around his neck, and his lips were compressed. His forehead wrinkled into a heavy frown as he heard the word Peyton.

"Are you sure, guard? Is the name Peyton?

Young, not bad-looking, with infernal yellow curls?"

"That's the lady, Mr. Stryne."

"Tell her I can't see her. Tell her I won't see her. Do you understand, I won't see her. Good God! That settles it. She has come with a cup of coffee. I know I shall never get out of here now. It was not a superstition. It was she. But for that damnable doubt, I should not be here this moment. I won't see her."

Stryne was pale in the gloom of his cell and he imagined that he was being strangled by a thick mass of yellow curls tangled about his neck. He leaned against the door for an instant, and then he said:

"What did I tell you to say to the lady, guard?"

"That you won't see her, Mr. Stryne."

"Now, that I reconsider, I don't think I would use just that language. Say to her: 'Mr. Stryne presents his compliments to Miss Peyton and begs that under the peculiar circumstances she will excuse him for not appearing.'"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, what are you going to say to the lady, guard?"

"That you won't see her, Mr. Stryne."

"Repeat the message I just gave you, word for word, please. 'Mr. Stryne presents his compliments

to Miss Peyton, and begs that under the peculiar circumstances she will excuse him for not appearing.' Be sure not to forget a word."

The attendant bowed, and, disappearing into the waiting-room, delivered the answer. Theodosia was walking restlessly about the room, gazing at the bare walls, when she received it.

"There surely is some mistake," insisted she.

"Tell Mr. Stryne that I am Miss Peyton, Colonel Peyton's daughter, that I must see him. It is a very important matter to him. Do not forget—Colonel Peyton's daughter."

Presently Stryne entered the apartment, his head well poised, his coat buttoned straight to his chin, his countenance grave. He bowed with dignity. Theodosia crossed the room, tears drowning the forget-me-nots in her eyes, and held out her hand. A sad smile which rent her heart rested upon Stryne's lips as he said:

"You and I choose strange meeting-places. Do we not, Miss Peyton?"

"You mean that I choose them, Mr. Stryne, but you create such extraordinary occasions."

At Stryne's signal they were seated. The socialist waited to hear Theodosia speak. Her big black hat was bent a trifle to one side, and her yellow curls fell down on her shoulders. Her pink and white

rounded face was as troubled as happy, protected youth can be. Theodosia bit her lip and clenched her fingers nervously.

"I know, Mr. Stryne, that you think I am a bandit, bloated with the blood of the people—it was something like that anyway—but I'm not a bit of it. I believe in everything you do. Perhaps I am horrid, but I can not help it. I was born of lazy people, you see. If you were descended from idlers, how do you know but you might have been exactly like me? I just cried when you went to prison last night. It is wrong, very wrong, and you must come out."

"I have tried to do that several times to-day, Miss Peyton, but I find it rather difficult," said Stryne with a smile.

Quickly Theodosia took from her inside cloak pocket her mining stocks and all her best jewels. She placed them on the table, her lips quivering with joy in the act as she cried:

"Ah, Mr. Stryne, look at all that. Now you are coming out. There are a hundred thousand dollars and more. I may be a highwayman, as you tell me; but if I am, I use my spoils to a good purpose. I ask only one favor of you in return, and it is that you will go home with my friends and me to dinner."

Stryne looked at the packet lying on the table,

and then approached Theodosia. "Miss Peyton, what can I say to you? How can I thank you? such a splendid woman as you are. It makes one happy to know that a person like you exists. What a pity that your generosity is to no purpose."

"Why of no avail, Mr. Stryne?" asked she.

"Because the officials are determined not to release me, Miss Peyton. The conspiracy law was passed at Sacramento with that intention. If I should offer them your security, and attempt to leave here, directly I should be rearrested with a higher bail demanded."

"But, Mr. Stryne, I have more bonds. I will compel my father to lend me all he has to release you. Now will you come?"

"Miss Peyton, your generosity forces me to tell you the entire truth. Your purpose is so laudable that I dislike to mar the pleasure it gives you, but I can accept nothing from Colonel Peyton; more emphatically still, nothing from you. When I leave here it must be by my own endeavor."

Theodosia's tears of pleasure turned into those of wrath and disappointment, but she composed herself for an instant and asked: "Mr. Stryne, do you really mean what you say? Do you decline to be free?"

"I refuse, Miss Peyton, as any one must see, to accept a favor from a woman or from Colonel Peyton."

"It is only a subterfuge, Mr. Stryne. A woman, indeed! You decline to allow me the least pleasure from those horrid flaming jewels and those wretched bonds. I always thought they were a nuisance. A little while ago I was so happy and grateful for them. Now I hate everything I own. It is not fair of you to stifle the first unselfish impulse I ever had in my life. You preach about helping the poor, who are ridden over by the wheels of the carriages of the rich. Some of us need a little assistance, I think, and you thwart my very first effort at getting away from myself and the evils of my class. You might help me develop nobility of character."

Stryne smiled at her tears, trembling lips, disheveled hair, and choking voice.

"Miss Peyton," said he, "as if you need my help. As if the sun were ever eclipsed or clouded for you. As if from the day of your birth the world has not united to make you in love with life. What can I do for you? Satisfy a caprice that you will forget to-morrow. You see as clearly as I that it is impossible. My life, Miss Peyton, is too serious a matter to upset for a woman's whim. I must remain here."

An expression of disdainful enlightenment came into Theodosia's eyes as she brushed the bonds and jewels to the floor and leaned against the table. "You

want to stay here, of course. I understand now. How simple I was! You must laugh at my dulness, Mr. Stryne. Mr. Oglethorpe was right. You want to be the persecuted martyr, suffering in the cause of the oppressed. You feel that every minute you are in prison endears you to your men. I might have thought of that, but I really believed in you. Do what you please with that rubbish on the floor. I have no use for it. I shall never again try to be good. I am going to call my friends."

Theodosia started toward the door when Stryne sprang to her side and said with rapid intensity: "Miss Peyton, you must not repeat those words. They are untrue, unjust, and you wrong me. Do you not see that you and I are enemies, that we must remain so? What would the men who believe in me say were I to allow Colonel Peyton to be my bondsman? What would they think of me should I accept your offer? Miss Peyton, pardon me, but what would I think of myself if I gained freedom by the aid of a woman, especially the daughter of Colonel Peyton? The nobility of your act lies in the offer itself and not in my acceptance. I am glad you made it. I think I understand the lofty impulse that inspired it. Be assured I shall never cease to thank you for giving me such belief in women. Yet, Miss Peyton, if I should accept your

kindness, every one of my men who have a faith in me which makes me tremble, every one would call it a bribe and me a traitor. Moreover, they would be right, for I should not be selling myself for money but to please a beautiful woman. You say you sympathize with this movement? Are you willing that I and it come to an end for your caprice?"

Theodosia dried her eyes, straightened her hat, and shook out her curls. Reluctantly she answered, "Is it really so serious as that, Mr. Stryne?"

"That is its full gravity, Miss Peyton."

"But you are very uncomfortable in this dreadful place?"

"Am I? I do not know. It is the last thing I think of. I do not live here."

"Then it is such a disgrace to be in prison, even if one is in the right."

"It is better to be here, Miss Peyton, than to free myself at the price you ask. That would be a dishonor I could not endure."

"Shall you never, never come out?"

Stryne smiled.

"Have no fear. Before a fortnight passes, I will leave here. I do not know the order of my going, but I have a firm conviction of the fact."

"When you come away, Mr. Stryne, is what you said true? Are we to be enemies?"

"We are France and Germany, Miss Peyton."

"But many French and Germans are the best of friends."

"They only seem so."

"What a pity, Mr. Stryne," said Theodosia, shaking her head sadly, and then she added:

"May I not call my friends and present them to you?"

"You will not think me uncivilized if I ask you to excuse me."

"Mr. Stryne, you are determined that I shall not have one small pleasure."

"Oh, as you wish," said the socialist in conciliation, as Theodosia bade Adele and the two men to enter.

Oglethorpe and Stryne shook hands after the English and American fashion. Ruspoli and the prisoner merely bowed, and in so doing each seemed to compare himself with the other. As the Socialist greeted the Prince, Stryne's followers would not have recognized him, for he had the ease, grace, and poise of Ruspoli, with whom he exchanged a few words in his language.

Adele Whiting and Oglethorpe were too well-bred to express their amusement at the failure of Theodosia's expedition as she gathered her jewels and papers, but they read it in each other's glance.

Ruspoli alone was grave, and politely, studiously regarded Stryne.

While they talked, Oglethorpe said in an undertone to Theodosia: "I told you he has better food here than outside. He does not underestimate the value of imprisonment. You could not pay him to leave."

Theodosia threw her head back and looked at him between narrowed lids. Percy was silenced. Presently there were adieux and Miss Peyton stepped back from the others as they were leaving to ask of the prisoner: "Tell me, Mr. Stryne, when you are allowed to depart from here, is there to be no truce? Are we to be active enemies?"

He bowed and answered, "Officially, Miss Peyton, yes."

Theodosia smiled.

Chapter IX

THE BIRTH OF A PARTY

IT was not an exaggeration when Stryne said that the interests ruling San Francisco and the State believed that he must be detained in prison. Many men and women ventured all they possessed to become his bondsmen, but no sooner was he released than he was rearrested. Finally his endeavors to free himself became such a mockery that he refused to continue them.

His followers one evening held a meeting in spite of the law. The police were hurled out headlong, but fortunately no one was killed. A suggestion was made to break down the jail, but a conservative spirit ruled. Stryne, the succeeding day, sent a message to his supporters, begging them to discontinue congregating, which could do him no good, and, without his restraint, might result disastrously.

Meanwhile public wrath was fomenting and growing. Lukewarm followers of the agitator became fanatics. The most indifferent felt that the man was being wronged. Officials of the city, congratulating each other upon what they considered a tri-

umph in restraining him from speech, were singularly impervious to the words of any but capitalists, and really believed their acts popular. Only the voice of the socialist from the prison checked riots, anarchy, bloodshed, and civil war. San Francisco was never so near a reign of terror, and this was held back only by the cause of it, Stryne.

Heretofore the working men's clubs did little but congregate, talk, and enlist members. Nothing was accomplished by them except the sowing of discontent. Yet they grew and waited. With nearly fifteen thousand organized men they were unable to release their prisoner from jail.

An event of seemingly little importance was the death of a State Senator in the North Beach district. It was necessary to choose a representative to take his place. A special election was held. It occurred at a dull time of the year, just when most people were leaving for the country. At first, since the district was strongly Republican, it was thought that the candidate of that party, who was the son of a prominent politician and a recent college graduate, would be elected without any effort. As a matter of form, the Democrats chose a young lawyer desiring advertisement, to be slaughtered at the polls.

Since Stryne became a figure in San Francisco, there had been no election. Consequently he was

not considered a quantity to be reckoned with. There was derision when McCann, the Irish union-president, was nominated on the new Working Men's ticket.

The senatorial district was inhabited mainly by small property owners, and the great capitalist felt as secure as in his own district. It was held highly amusing of the Working Men's party to make its first appearance in that district.

The prosperous were positive there was no new issue to change the usual result of election. It was so clear that the Republican was the only respectable party, the one working to save the country from the proven disaster of Democratic rule, that these conservative middle-class people could do nothing but elect its candidate for the State Senate. Those with the love of battle in their veins wished the contest were not so one-sided.

McCann, who was one of the well-to-do men of the district, made a house-to-house canvass, speaking to small groups of people. The Republican opponent was a little vexed when he learned that McCann had forced an issue into the campaign, and that was the incarceration of Stryne.

McCann laid aside State and national issues. He explained to his constituents, whose babies he had kissed for years preparatory to his flight into the

world of statesmanship, that it was merely a question of whether they were to vote for his opponent and approve of the imprisonment of an innocent man, or if they intended to declare themselves in favor of liberty of speech.

"Neighbors, let me tell you," shouted he one day, in a paroxysm of eloquence, "we are a nice lot of patriots, we are. Our ancistors fought in the Revolution for liberty." (McCann had been in America fifteen years.)

"The War of 1812 was a warning to Great Britain that we must have all the privileges to which any great independent nation is entitled. Not many years have passed since we spilled the blood of a million men that the nigger could have the rights which all human beings are born to enjoy. After this fighting for liberty, we lock up the noblest man God ever created for telling the truth to a rascally lot of thieves who set themselves up on Nob Hill so they won't make their eyes sore by looking at such ordinary folks as you and me. What do you think of us as patriots? Oughtn't we to go and sell out or drown ourselves?

"Now, neighbors, you know me and I know you. We are all of us with the under man in the fight. My opponent is a very fine gentleman, I believe. He wears a plug hat and carries his college diploma in

his pocket. A slouch hat is good enough for me, I don't belong to the plug-hat brigade, and the only diploma I have is my union card. His fine education don't seem to make him want to help his fellow men. He says it is right that Paul Stryne should have his voice stopped by prison walls. The only issue in the campaign is, Do you approve of the party that resorts to such dirty tricks? If you do, don't vote for me. I won't have your support. Choose the man with the stovepipe hat and the college diploma."

The Republican candidate wailed against demagogs, and declared himself a man of honor, above the cheap trick, the contemptible artifice of appealing to class prejudice. He called upon the intelligence of his hearers, their interest in the well-being and prosperity of the community. The lawyer declared with emphasis that whether Stryne was in jail or not had nothing to do with the campaign. He pitied him for being there, as he did all law-breakers, but it was not an issue.

At a meeting where he expected a hearty reception, the Republican candidate was hooted and frequently obliged to dodge potatoes and eggs. He went to his managers in thorough disgust, complaining that they had told him there was to be no contest, when for the life of him he could not see how he

was to be elected. They assured the political novice that a great deal of noise and no votes are characteristic of the demagogs' campaign.

When election day approached, the newspapers accused Stryne of writing McCann's speeches and stated that the agitator was directing his lieutenants' campaign from his cell. They had grown bold during Stryne's imprisonment. For an election without an issue, it was unusually stormy.

Five days before the close of the contest, the Democratic candidate, having secured all the advertisement he desired and wishing to curry favor with the working men, withdrew in favor of McCann. This forced the first sign of a break in Republican confidence. The retiring statesman was charged in the journals with having sold out to Stryne. Ruling influences in politics realized that something must be done to prevent a stampede to McCann. Their candidate came into the committee-room two nights before election and threatened to withdraw if some one was not seen and Stryne released from prison.

"I might as well give up," said he; "for every howl that fellow sends out from jail is good for a dozen votes. He has nothing to do with the fight, but he makes the people think so, which amounts to the same thing. Have the railroad and mining people release him the day before election."

This occasioned a long parley. The active working politicians were in favor of granting the candidate's request, but the men representing the great corporations combated it, for it was a boon they could not concede without admitting weakness. They refused to be cowards. They answered that they would rather see McCann elected.

The election of the Senator was of small import, but when it became known that it was a struggle between the imprisoned Stryne and the moneyed interests, the entire city and State became interested. This was to be a test vote.

The working men's candidate closed his campaign with a large rally; the demonstration was so great that it seemed every voting voice in the city was there screaming its approval of McCann. Election day showed that the district which previously was Republican by a majority of one thousand had chosen Patrick McCann State Senator by a plurality of twelve hundred. Until his death he attributed his election to the charm of his presence, the eloquence of his speech, and the quality of his Americanism. He secretly hoped to go to the national Senate.

The morning following McCann's election came half a dozen offers from bondsmen for Stryne's release from prison. He accepted them, and again endeavored to free himself.

The socialist explained to his followers that he had no hesitancy in accepting their security, since he came there in his effort to better their condition. He walked from his cell down the street to his room south of Market Street unmolested. There was no judge in San Francisco bold enough to issue a warrant for Stryne's arrest, for from his cell he had been sufficiently potent to direct the election of a State Senator. His prophecy to Theodosia was fulfilled. He was free and by his own endeavor. The working men ceased to be regarded as a mere hungry band of the discontented and idle. They were a political party, the party of the future, and Stryne was their leader.

Chapter X

THEODOSIA EXAMINES HERSELF

FROM the day of Stryne's release the forces opposing him assumed a conciliatory attitude. It was expected that, since he had elected a State Senator, from that time forward he would take a more active part in politics. He himself said nothing on the subject, but it was freely stated that Stryne was to be the future boss of San Francisco.

Walsingham and Pickens called at his headquarters and told him they admired the force and energy of youth, even tho rash. They felt he was deserving of assistance and so gave him secret advice, that Eldorado would rise several points the following day. Stryne was quite welcome to profit by the information, but they trusted he would not make it public.

The socialist's answer was that he had no money; and even were he sufficiently fortunate to possess it, he could not afford to take the risk in stock gambling while there were so many surrounding him needing food, shelter, and clothing. The capitalists kindly offered to open an account for him with their brokers,

but he politely refused the offer. Colonel Peyton was the only man of the railroad clique who did not make the acquaintance of Stryne.

Aspirants for small offices and great alike sought him. These harbingers of success ranged from embryotic assemblymen to judges of the supreme court. Even candidates of the United States Senate were not averse to knowing him and expressing their goodwill.

For the first time Stryne moved out of the limits of the city and he decided to follow his fame into the remote parts of the State. Wherever he traveled he addressed large audiences. The poor and the representatives of the great financial interests alike went to hear him. The sound of his voice, the glance of his eye, the touch of his hand made men disregard his words and believe only in him. He was the savior of them all, the messiah of the laboring man.

While on his journey, Stryne organized working men's clubs. A campaign was not far distant, and all realized that he would control nominations if not elections.

When he returned from his trip to the north and south, it was conservatively estimated that forty thousand voters were under his influence. Many from the Democratic and Republican parties had

joined him, but the former gave him more support than the latter. There was a very large element of the young, the unknown, the ambitious, demagogs, dreamers, students, men fresh from the University, all hoping to escape the tedious climb to success by riding on the great Stryne wave. The masses were positive that at their leader's word the legislature, mayor, and governor were to be chosen. The opulent feared that there was serious cause for this belief.

During the weeks of Stryne's absence on his tour of the State, Theodosia was entertaining different sets of friends at Santa Cruz. Ruspoli passed his time between the summer resort and the city, seeing very little of Miss Peyton. When he was in town Theodosia received long letters from him, imploring the privilege of passing one afternoon with her at her place in the country. Once he wrote:

DEAREST LADY: Is it friendship, indifference, or repugnance you experience for me? I ask now, for when we meet I can utter no question; all my spirit is so full of you, so overcome by that perfume of sweetness which stifles me. Yet my unslakable longing is to be once more in the presence of your unquenching beauty.

Other gentlemen that I might name, for whom you are confessedly unconcerned, have the daily privilege

of being by your side. I only am excluded, yet every moment, I see, I feel only you, sweeping deliciously over my every fiber, transporting me far away from earthly affinities to the infinite stars, where only love lives, the true ideal supernatural life. And you are so supremely dear that I would not give one moment of this intoxication for all eternity. No, not tho the time is to come when you will not listen, and little by little I must wring the life out of my love. I would almost pray you to command me to do this now or call me to you.

My essence, my force, all my self I have given you. There is not a recess of my heart hidden from you, not a desire nor a heart-beat but you have felt it. One should bestow all this silently, I know, but I am weak or selfish enough to ask a moment in return. I desire only to see you again, to rebreathe that balsam which inebriates, that ineffable sweetness—you—dear lady. RUSPOLI.

What the Prince stated was true. Oglethorpe and Lieutenant Armstrong saw Theodosia with utmost freedom. Of all her admirers he only lived at a distance from her. When she called him to her side it was ever with an appearance of reluctance. He was given cordiality or indifference according to her mood, and directly exiled to San Francisco until her temper changed. To be sure it was only ninety miles; but then, he argued, the tragedy of Romeo occurred because he was banished twenty from Juliet.

When Theodosia read the Prince's letter she was overwhelmed with such a confusion of reasons for her treatment of him that she had no inclination to disentangle them. At that moment she brushed them all aside and responded with a little note in Italian, asking him to sail with them to Monterey.

Later Miss Peyton sat looking out on a lavender and grayish-pink horizon where she might have seen a sail had she not been endeavoring to answer the Prince's questions for herself. Of course she would never be sufficiently absurd to reply to him.

Of all the sentiments felt for him, only friendship contained serious consideration. Theodosia liked to place all her men, and especially the Prince, on that basis. It was so sensible, so prudent, so exclusive. She was the only woman she knew who, after seeing Ruspoli's eyes, with pupil and iris the same in color, burning into her own, would not have given friendship notice.

Finally it occurred to her that friendship is essentially sympathy of the mind, and the Prince and she here were hardly in unison. Besides she knew as well as another that men with eyes and guardsmen's shoulders like Ruspoli do not inspire friendship among young women.

Was she in love with him? No, of course not. What did she want of him? She wished to give

him nothing, but he must give her all, his mind, his heart, his soul. The Prince could not marry her, but if he could? The thought was dizzying. Why? Because—she was a silly woman—and he was a handsome man—and he could say, "My cousin, the King."

When would she be willing to give him up? The question hammered into her ears and numbed her brain. She answered to herself, he must never leave her. Why? Vanity. Every woman has vanity. It is less humiliating than love, for it is not a surrender of self. Why did she see him so rarely? Because she wished to keep him; because, when he could not meet her, he realized every second his affection.

This answer satisfied her inquisitive self until the interrogation came, "Is Theodosia afraid of Ruspoli?" She laughed and was happy that she did so, for the spontaneity of her mirth proved the suggestion ridiculous.

"How very vain I must be," thought she. "I care nothing for him. To be absolutely honest, perhaps I have a slight interest in him, a caprice as for Von Sternberg and the Spanish priest and the others. But Ruspoli must love me because he does it so well, with such an effect of newness and strangeness. If he did not love me I should be unhappy. It would

be almost another world." She felt that her cross-examination was complete.

When the Prince arrived there was a sail to Monterey and return. Colonel Peyton was in charge of the party. As they were saying their adieux, Ruspoli bent over Theodosia's hand and proved the possible eloquence of a simple good night.

"Signorina, how shall I express to you my thanks for this great pleasure? I have been able to look at you for twelve hours and you were gracious every minute. You never were so kind. I don't wish to sleep to-night and forget it. Must I go back to San Francisco to-morrow?"

"As you wish, Prince. Adele and I are running up for a few days."

"And you will allow me to see you four hours more on the train? Ah, Signorina, you are too charming. I realize how presumptuous I am, but had you the least idea in planning the trip that we might travel together?"

"How droll you are! Not in the least, Prince. Adele and I are merely going to town to arrange the dinner for Mr. Stryne I promised you so long ago. Whether we can induce him to accept is another matter, but we have planned a campaign."

"You are unnecessarily cruel, Signorina. It was to have been such a happy night for me. Must you

always give me pain? If some day only you will travel four hours to please me. The thought is too delicious for realization. Heaven is still in the skies."

Theodosia was in a pink evening-gown, and the color of the silk suffused her cheeks and shoulders. Ruspoli, with his eyes fixed always upon her, marking the quiver of an eyelash, noted this. He breathed quickly and almost gasped the words:

"Signorina, Theodosia, given of the gods, thou dost care. Some day thou wilt come. Yes, I see it. Do not say no. I love thee. Thou shalt love me. *Dio mio.* What a thought! What a dream! Love!"

The Italian, quite pale, sank into a window-seat, the strong, slender, shaking hands covering his face. Theodosia, with more gentleness than she had ever offered him, went to his side and almost tenderly said, "Now you must go, Prince. Good-night."

Ruspoli arose, again bowed over her hand with much ceremony, and answered:

"Signorina, God does well to keep some joys from us, for they kill. *Buona nuota.*"

The next day when the Prince called at the Peyton house to act as escort of Miss Peyton and Miss Whiting to San Francisco, he was told that they had arisen early and taken the morning train.

Chapter XI

STALKING THE LION

STRYNE was occupied with his plans for the first convention of the working men who were to meet in August and make nominations for State and city officials. Every evening he spoke on the sand-lot to increasing audiences. After each address he held an impromptu reception, and all who desired conversed with him. During the day he visited the club, called on families in need, and made the acquaintance of every voter. His memory became proverbial, and he recalled faces and names with equal facility.

Considerable time was spent by him in writing and distributing pamphlets setting forth the wrongs of the working men in California and the possible cure for them. Republicans and Democrats endeavored to counteract the effect of these circulars with contradictory statements.

Theodosia realized that if she wrote a note to Stryne, again entreating him to be her guest, a refusal was certain. It was equally impossible to attend the meetings on the sand-lot with any hope of

conversing with him. She felt that she must see him personally, and so she decided upon long walks with Adele Whiting south of Market Street, near his home.

Miss Peyton never before had arisen so early, but eight o'clock saw her and Adele walking in most unlikely streets. The first and second ventures were fruitless. The third morning, as Theodosia awoke, she said to her companion:

"Adele, I have a flash, and you know my flashes come true. To-day we are going to meet Paul Stryne. I feel it. I think I shall wear my blue cloth gown and my blue hat; with my blue eyes we shall make him dine with us. Shan't we, old girl?"

"I don't believe in your flashes any more, Theo dear. You had one yesterday morning, and we did not meet him. Let us sleep and not trouble."

However, Theodosia insisted, and within a few minutes was dressed in a dark-blue princesse gown, then much in vogue, the trimming of which consisted of two rows of tiny buckles extending from her collar to the bottom of the skirt. With it she wore a large, dark blue, heavily plumed hat.

As Theodosia went down the California Street hill, her white young flesh glowing, her large full eyes blue as the mountain sky, her body erect and well poised, there was something in the spring of her

step, the unruliness in the fluff of her long yellow curls, which reminded one of a thoroughbred colt debating whether it is better to wear a bridle or run away.

The morning air was fresh and warm, and youth leaped in her veins. She felt that suddenly her soul was kindled, and she exulted in her strength, beauty, and the joy of living. She desired to scream for the mere pleasure of respiration. There was nothing in the world which mattered to her at that moment. What did she care whether or not she met Stryne, so long as she could breathe?

The young women passed his house and he was not to be seen. They walked around the block and still the socialist was not visible. The mind of a handsome woman on a beautiful morning may easily cloud. Theodosia pinched Adele Whiting's arm and forced a groan from her when she saw Stryne descending the steps of the cottage where he lodged.

"Adele, isn't that some one I've seen before? I think so. Who is it?"

"Couldn't for the life of me imagine, Theo. However, the face is rather familiar now that I think of it. This is a glorious morning."

"Why, Adele, isn't that Mr. Stryne coming up the street?"

"Mr. Stryne? I don't know him. Oh, you mean

Mr. Stryne, the socialist? Really, so it is. Who would have thought that we should meet him here? Queer, isn't it?" said Miss Whiting.

"It is the first time we have encountered him, isn't it? And we walked this way so often too. Now it occurs to me, Adele, I am going to ask him to dinner. I have wanted to do that for such a long time."

At this point the ladies and Stryne were facing each other, but he was unconscious of it, for he might have been a somnambulist from his manner of his staring vacantly in front of him. He would have passed without observing them had not Miss Peyton called out:

"I say, Mr. Stryne, this will never do. You are not awake. It comes from too little sleep. Miss Whiting and I can not let you pass without good-morning."

Immediately Paul stood uncovered and was greeting both of them, but his eyes turned to Theodosia.

"You know, Miss Peyton, I am acquainted with so few ladies that it never occurs to me to look at them. I take it for granted that they are strangers."

Adele began: "We were so surprised to see you, Mr. Stryne——"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Stryne. We are walking a great deal now. The doctor ordered it." The socialist seemed surprised. "Not exactly ordered it,

but he says it is very good for us, you know. Especially morning walks. So we came down south of Market, for there are fewer hills, and then one learns the geography of the town. So you live here, Mr. Stryne? Strange we never saw you before."

"We meet now only because I over-slept."

"It is so good to see you again," said Theodosia. "And I hear such splendid things of you. Mr. Walsingham and Mr. Pickens are quite champions of yours. They say I converted them, but I tell them you did it yourself. It is very trite but very true that nothing succeeds like success. Isn't it, Mr. Stryne?"

"Do you call this success, Miss Peyton? I am surprised. It is but the seed of success. We shall have a harvest, perhaps, in the future."

"Tell me what you are going to be, Mr. Stryne. I love secrets and I can keep them too. President, dictator, or king? Whichever it is, you must make me prime minister, for I was the first to swear allegiance."

"I was not talking of myself, Miss Peyton, but of conditions. There are to be improvements in our laws."

"Is that all? It is stupid. I'm not willing to be a milliner or dressmaker that all the poor people may become rich unless you are to be dictator.

If you are I don't object. I should like to see something new in history, and I don't know any one who could turn things topsy-turvy and make us all mind more charmingly than you, but I must be Prime Minister. Oh, it just occurs to me, Mr. Stryne. You made me a promise when I last saw you. I'm to have a little dinner for you and you are to come."

"I promised, Miss Peyton? You must be mistaken. I could not have forgotten."

"Oh, perhaps you are right, Mr. Stryne. But you will come, will you not?"

Adele walked on a few paces, and Theodosia and the socialist were alone.

"Miss Peyton, we've met but twice before, and you always come as a temptress. It is not fair of you to take away my belief in myself. My place is among men. There I am afraid of none of them, but you seem to appear only to show me just how weak I am."

"That is merely a preliminary to a refusal, which must not be given, Mr. Stryne. Tell me frankly you do not like me."

The socialist looked at her.

"There are some pleasures I can not give myself without being misunderstood by my supporters. We are just entering upon a political campaign, our first. What will my men say of my sincerity when they

hear I have been your guest? What will you think of it? Merely that I have my price, and it is your favor. I grant, Miss Peyton, that if I am to become negotiable, I choose that as the estimate of my value. Still, much as I am grateful to you for your kindness in twice thinking of me, I must again refuse. This only makes me still more anxious to know you, but we are two enemies who can not mess together."

"The world is not so horrid; your men have no faith in you if they object to a simple little dinner at my house. I am not a dreadful octopus; I, too, am a Strynite, and how can your followers oppose our friendship?"

"Nothing could be more womanly, more noble, than your offer to me while I was in prison, but this dinner—my friends would not understand it."

"What would they say?"

"That you are posing, Miss Peyton, or that you are capricious."

"Isn't that cruel and unjust of them, Mr. Stryne?"

"Very. It would make no difference to you if I accept your invitation. You have your friends, your position to keep you from criticism, but I have no fortune except myself. The success or failure of our ticket and laws depends upon me. It is a great trust of which I am the guardian and I dare not compromise it."

"I beg you, Mr. Stryne, do something that is not correct and in a straight line. You are too good. Please walk up the street crookedly. Please do not do your duty. There is no fun in it. I did it once when I went down to the jail to see you, and I never will again. No one appreciated my effort at loftiness—not even you, who believe I am capricious."

Theodosia lowered her lids and her lips trembled. On the edge of her dark lashes quivered a crystal drop—a tear.

"Miss Peyton, I can not endure this. When shall I come?" said Stryne, his face contracted with pain.

"To-morrow evening at seven. Remember there must be no last-moment excuses."

"I have given my word, Miss Peyton."

Chapter XII

THE DINNER TO STRYNE

ADELE Whiting distributed her time among the houses of the opulent and powerful of San Francisco, but, all things being equal, she preferred living at the Peytons'. That worldly young person was not insensible to the fact that theirs was the best kept ménage in the city; besides Theodosia was most congenial to her.

The evening of the Stryne dinner Miss Whiting, as usual, was ready to assist Miss Peyton in receiving her guests. Adele's homage to her friend was easily given. Theodosia did not demand it, but, realizing it as her due, accepted it with the indifference of an old friend.

Miss Peyton would have forced praise from a rival in her girlish gown of shirred white tulle trimmed with clusters of apple blossoms. She wore the same flower in her hair and resembled a débutante more than a belle of several seasons.

The frame of her body was fragile, but so well covered with flesh that she seemed like a large woman. The movement of her head displayed no cords

in her neck. Her arms had the roundness and dimples of an infant, and the muscles were invisible. Her lips were red like the soul of the grape. Her eyes overflowed with life. The brilliancy of the sheen of her mass of yellow hair held the glance. She walked the entire length of the long room looking at her train undulating behind her like white foam, and then, turning to Adele, asked:

"Do I really look well to-night? Tell me the truth."

"Beautiful, beautiful, my dear, and all the superlatives. Some one has come, and I am sure it is——"

"Ruspoli, of course. Let him wait. Tell me again, am I beautiful this evening?"

Another guest arrived at that instant, and the Prince was deprived of the few moments he had hoped to pass with his hostess. When he dined at the Peytons' he was always in advance of the appointed hour. As he saluted his hostess, he said in Italian: "Do you not think, Signorina, that, since I've expressed to you so often the repugnance this socialist, this Stryne, inspires in me, I'm very amiable to come to meet him, where of all places he should not be under your roof."

"*Au contraire*, Prince, it is very good of me to ask you, since you were so naughty about it."

"Being a lover and always thinking of myself, I

have another reason for grief, Signorina, tho I do not believe I can bring myself to confess it."

"Very well, do not try."

"You are not curious, Signorina?"

"Not sufficiently to ask."

"It is this, Signorina. Pray, do not think me a gamin. Heretofore, not that you meant to confer an honor, I suppose, but merely because I was the stranger, you were always kind enough to place me at your right. You probably do not recollect, but each time I sat by your side is burned into my memory. This is the first occasion when I relinquish that post. How can I breathe, Signorina, and see another there? I am a trifle *difficile* even in my rivals. If it were Signor Armstrong, Signor Oglethorpe, or any of your other friends, I should be sufficiently pained, but I can not suffer that a man take my place whom I could not meet on the field of honor."

"The man whom I think worthy to sit by my side is fit to meet you, Prince, even in a duel."

"Pardon," humbly replied Ruspoli; "on your account I would gladly meet Signor Stryne on whatever field he might elect."

"Prince, don't be such a fire-eater. Mr. Stryne and I hvae more important persons to fight than you."

Armstrong and Oglethorpe arrived presently and

paid their respects to Miss Peyton, while Ruspoli conversed with Miss Traver. The Pickenses and Walsinghams came immediately and there was no one wanting but Stryne himself. It was a quarter after seven, and as Theodosia saw the clock's hands, she turned pale. Mr. Pickens, an apoplectic, stout, thick-necked man, waddled across the room, and bawled out: "Colonel, I knew Theodosia was up to one of her pranks. It is a good joke on us, ain't it? After that night when she stopped Stryne's bonfire and sent his beggars all flying down the hill, I believed she could do what would stump any of us men. They never came back again. But I should have known that this was a little too-too even for the girl. We might as well eat and not wait for him any longer. I suppose he is down on the sand-lot, howling against us and enjoying the joke."

John Pickens owned as much railway and mining stock as any one in the city, yet his ideas of good form in speech and manner were only nebulous.

"We shall wait for Mr. Stryne, Mr. Pickens. Something has detained him," said Theodosia. "But I am positive he will be here, for I have his word of honor."

"Ha, ha! little girl, you've got enough faith to walk on the water with. But I know men and I'm right this time."

Jessie Traver, long of chin and sallow of face, approached and suggested: "You mustn't be too hard on the poor laboring man, Mr. Pickens. Perhaps he has only one blue flannel shirt and he has to wait until it is washed. Out of honor to the guest, don't you think all you gentlemen should have worn colored shirts with red bandanna handkerchiefs about your necks? That is undoubtedly the sand-lot evening dress. I put on this socialistic red satin gown to please Mr. Stryne."

Mr. Pickens laughed until his neck grew crimson: "That's bully, Jessie. You can say the devilish mean things better than any one I know; but, Lord, I wouldn't want to marry you. You ain't rosy enough, by rights, to have thorns on your tongue."

Adele Whiting whispered to the hostess: "Theo dear, I'd rather he'd stay at home than come with a red handkerchief around his neck, but don't mind."

"Of course, I'm not minding, Adele. Mr. Stryne will be here, and not in a blue flannel shirt."

"I am afraid, Theo dear."

The butler announced Mr. Stryne and all ceased speech except Ruspoli and Adele Whiting.

They continued conversation on topics that did not interest them. When Miss Peyton shook hands with Mr. Stryne, she included Mr. Pickens in her glance. It bespoke victory, for the socialist wore a

well-fitting evening suit of European make and an immaculate white shirt with a tucked bosom. His garments were a part of him and he might have been appearing in them each day of his life.

Evening clothes destroy or make a man, and Stryne, somewhat paler and thinner than formerly, was, next to Ruspoli, the handsomest man in the room.

The Pickenses and Walsinghams were most cordial to the socialist. Every one received him with excellently counterfeited friendship, except the Italian, who was ultra-ceremonious. As his heels clicked, there was so much stateliness in his bow that it was mere satire. Stryne returned an exact imitation of the Prince's greeting. They might have been reared in the same school.

Jessie Traver remarked, as she saw the socialist, "I am sure this will be deadly dull. I thought we were going to have an experience, but Mr. Stryne is just like one of us."

"Oh no, he is not," said Oglethorpe. "He is only pretending."

When the party reached the dining-room, they found apple blossoms everywhere, peering from most unexpected spots. The damask itself was covered with the pink and white petals. Bowls of the flowers were scattered about on the round table, which was lighted with cut-glass candelabra, decorated with pink

shades. Overhead was an umbrella of the branches, and, as the guests were seated, from above floated downward more of the flowers, as tho some one had shaken a tree. The perfume of spring filled the air, and Miss Peyton, her hair and shoulders covered with the blossoms, was like a sprite of nature, heralding the fleeting season of bloom.

Ruspoli took in Jessie Traver, and found himself seated at his hostess' left. As soon as the occasion presented itself, he turned to her, and said: "I'm very happy not to be quite exiled, and I thank you. Your cruelty is only a caprice, for you might have placed me across the way."

The board was too large for general conversation, and, after the guests resolved themselves into congenial groups, Mr. Pickens called from his seat opposite the socialist: "I suppose you know, Stryne, you had us all nearly scared to death a few months ago. We were loaded up with guns like forts. United States is a great country. So broad-minded. Who would have thought then that we should all be eating with you to-night?"

Walsingham, a big, lean, angular man, with an eagle's face and Uncle Sam beard, who had lived next door to his partner, Pickens, ever since they started their small shop in Sacramento, and had never lost an opportunity to gibe him good-naturedly,

added: "Pick was scared, Stryne. There is no getting around that. His house was filled with guards and guns. He was almost as afraid of the Winchesters as he was of you. Pickens would have skedaddled to Mexico with Belden, but he was afraid of apoplexy."

"If only the Pickenses and Walsinghams could learn not to talk shop," groaned Jessie Traver to Ruspoli in an undertone. "I suppose their grandchildren will know better, but they themselves will never understand."

Then it was necessary for Miss Traver to explain to the Italian the meaning of the idiom "talk shop."

"How is your ticket going?" asked Pickens. "Have you named all your men, Stryne?"

"Mr. Stryne and I are not going to tell you a word about it, Mr. Pickens. We are diplomats, and if you ask us any questions we shall not answer them. He will always speak the truth, but in case military necessity demands us to tell lies, why, I shall do so without the slightest hesitation, for Mr. Stryne has promised that I'm to be Prime Minister when our party comes into power. Besides, Mr. Pickens, I don't think it a bit nice of you to come to break bread with the leaders of the Working Men's party and, while drinking our own wine, try to worm our secrets out of us."

Theodosia had saved the socialist from making any remarks.

"I am glad to know these things, Miss Peyton," answered Pickens. "Who is to handle the patronage? If you have charge of that I am going to court you."

"No one but merit is to give out offices in our party, Mr. Pickens," answered Theodosia, with statesmanlike gravity.

"Pshaw! That's all poppycock. You will never win but once if you are going to carry out that scheme. It is only your theory, Miss Peyton. I understand human nature just a mite, and Stryne is the practical politician of the firm. He knows life is just brass tacks and there is no use in playing you live in Utopia."

"My premier, Miss Peyton," said Stryne, bowing to Theodosia and then addressing Pickens, "has given you my exact sentiment. We think that we are to make a revolution in politics in San Francisco by using only the merit system in our nominations and appointments in case we win. The sole question we shall ask will be, 'Is the candidate honest? Is he competent?' We think, Mr. Pickens, that is the only way to achieve permanent success. You seem to leave out of consideration that after all it is the people who vote. You can find newspapers to voice your opinion, but it is the unwritten belief that

decides the contest. We are anxious to go before them a second time with nothing to recommend us but what we do."

The railroad owner laid down his knife and fork and placed his fists on the table as he spoke.

"Stryne, I don't mind telling you I like you. I used to think you an infernal demagog, but I have come to the conclusion you believe all that devilish rot you spout. You have talked yourself into the notion. Now I look at you as merely misguided, and I think with proper schooling you might be all right. We haven't got the slightest objection, Peyton, Walsingham, and the rest of us people, to your being the boss or manager of the State if you can be converted of some of those ideas of yours. We've got friends everywhere in power. The judges of the Supreme Court in particular always work in harmony with us, and the smaller officials don't oppose our interests. They are good men. The thing for you to do is to give up this waving of red flag and spouting on the sand-lot. It's all wrong, threatens capital, gives us a bad reputation, and keeps up a continuous muss. We have good tickets. Indorse either the Republican or Democratic, it makes no difference which. They are all our friends. Then you can be our political manager for the rest of your life. We want a smart young man like you."

"If we were at one of *your* dinners, Mr. Pickens, you might take it that we were ready to sell ourselves out," said Theodosia. "Your French cook makes such a lovely mess of *potage* that I would sell my birthright at the second course. But here you might at least delay bribing us until coffee."

"I've known Theodosia here ever since she was a day old, and I like her abuse, Stryne, because she's so devilish clever in giving it and yet never means a word of it."

"You quite overlook, I am sorry to say, Mr. Pickens, that I am powerless in the matter," said the socialist. "I am nothing myself but the spokesman of forty thousand men. My strength lies in them. They are certain I am honest. Every one of the working men would trust me with his entire fortune. I am proud of their friendship, their reliance. Their loyalty is the finest thing that has come into my life. I believe everything I say for them. I am one of them, and would no sooner betray them than stab my lieutenant. I could not endorse a man who at any time has shown sympathy with capital or corporations. I have always thought, Mr. Pickens, how singularly blind you men who control the fortunes of California are, that you are not content with decreased revenue and the satisfaction of the people."

"You are under thirty, I take it, Stryne. I don't.

know exactly how to make you out. You ought long ago to have done with mental measles and chicken-pox. Some time you will be ashamed of yourself for all that tommyrot about the people. When I was nineteen or twenty I think I believed in them. Don't have any delusions. A laboring man is just like you and me, except we have some intelligence and he is weak-minded. Give him five dollars a day and he wants ten. He never will be satisfied any more than I will. The richer he gets, the more exacting and unreasonable he becomes. He has all the obstinacy and wrong-headedness of dull ignorance. He is the despair of the optimist. Besides he won't bathe, and until he does there is no hope for him. A man don't progress until he is clean."

"Wouldn't it be just as well to give the poor fellow a meal before you bathe him?" asked Theodosia.

"No, bathe on an empty stomach always. Then you won't have indigestion. I know, for I haven't eaten a complete meal in twenty years."

"Of course, Mr. Pickens I can not agee with you. If I did I should not be the so-called leader of the Working Men's party."

"It is useless for the Strynites and the Nob Hill People to argue, Mr. Pickens," said Theodosia. "You make all these statements about laborers, but

why don't you give them a chance to show the good there is in them, by discharging Chinamen, raising wages, and giving the unemployed positions?"

"Because if we did that, there would be nothing for any of us, including Miss Anarchist-in-a-Palace —but I want to talk to Stryne of his reforms. You can't do anything for a lot of beasts of burden, my boy, but drive them. Within a month after election, if you don't give them all champagne and terrapin, they crucify you just as sure as their brows are low and dull. Cut it all while you've got a chance and stick by us. We have come to stay just as long as gold has value."

"I don't agree with you again, Mr. Pickens, in the great difference between the employee and the employer. They are both in ruts, but in nine cases out of ten had the rich man been given the same environment as the poor he would not have thrown the pack off his back. There are granite men who fight their way out of any hole to eminence in finance, but more often it is chance. Success develops the mind, and most laborers, unless I am greatly mistaken, with the right start and influence, could do as well as the capitalists."

By this time the men were alone smoking, and the argument continued. Within half an hour after they returned to the ladies, Stryne arose to leave. Theo-

dosia, accompanying him to the door of the drawing room, requested: "Will you not return in thirty minutes? There are some questions I should like to ask you."

"It will be a pleasure for me to answer them, Miss Peyton."

Chapter XIII

THE VALET OF A GENTLEMAN

THE other guests departed soon after Stryne, and Mr. Pickens assured his hostess that he was confident the socialist could be "brought round to the right way of thinking." "I am glad to see you cultivate him, Theo," he said. "Show him a little society and that will fix him. I wish you was my girl. Between us I am sure we would win him over and run the State." Mr. Pickens was jubilant and red with self-satisfaction.

"You know very well, Mr. Pickens, that he has converted me."

"Let him think so, Theodosia. It is just as well. Good night. You've got a pretty smart girl, Peyton."

The Walsinghams declared that Stryne was not half bad. Ruspoli was the last to take Miss Peyton's hand in farewell.

"I feel profoundly honored by the fact, Signorina, that you, the future Prime Minister of the Working Man's party, addressed two words to me this evening. When President Stryne rules in America, he will re-

quire a valet or butler. Will Signorina, the Prime Minister, recommend me to the great man's favor?"

Pierced by the bitterness of the Italian, Theodosia cast her head backward and held her chin high as she answered in the same key, "Signorina, the future Prime Minister, will do nothing of the sort; for all of her influence could not cause Mr. Stryne to see in Prince Ruspoli a man fit either to be his valet or his butler."

The Italian's eyelids came together like a flash of lightning. He dropped her hand and Theodosia saw rage before her as she had never yet encountered it. She realized that if she had been a man he would have struck her, and at that moment as she heard him exclaim, "Signorina, I demand, I command an apology for this affront," she wondered if her strength could much longer hold out against his. He awaited no answer from her, and only the presence of the guests kept her from flinging herself into his arms.

"What if he knew that!" thought she in terror. The Italian walked several times around the block unable to leave the spot where the object of his wrath and love dwelt. At half after ten, in ascending the hill, he saw Stryne pass up the steps of Colonel Peyton's house and enter without delay.

Theodosia met the socialist in the hall, and led him into a small white-and-gold reception room.

They were seated opposite each other somewhat nervous at meeting at such an unusual hour. Miss Peyton began: "For a person who is as a rule abnormally normal I find myself doing the queerest things, Mr. Stryne, and it is your fault. You are such an extraordinary man."

"People who are natural or sincere, Miss Peyton, are always considered a little odd."

"Why do you think I asked you to come back this evening, Mr. Stryne?"

"I have no idea, unless it was curiosity."

"No. It was interest in you and your life and your ideas. What did you think of the people tonight?"

"I haven't considered them, Miss Peyton."

"I hope, Mr. Stryne, you will allow what Mr. Pickens said to make no impression on you. Do not be influenced by him."

The socialist laughed. "Did you imagine there was anything new in what he said, Miss Peyton? Those arguments are as old as the pyramids. It is useless to answer them."

"I'm happy you are so strong, Mr. Stryne. I'm proud of you. What a wretch Mr. Pickens is! My father is a gentleman, but Pickens is a horrid caricature of capital—a bad man."

"Not a bad man, Miss Peyton, merely selfish, one-

sided, uncultivated, the victim of his environment, a laborer in finance."

"I'm glad you are broad-minded enough to say that." Theodosia leaned forward, her elbows on her knees, holding her head upright: "Tell me, as you would answer your conscience, are you sincere, Mr. Stryne?"

He hesitated, closed his eyes in thought. Then his mouth formed into a straight line. "The first time I ever saw you, Miss Peyton, I could have answered with certainty. No man could accomplish what I have unless sincere. I was sincere. Now I tell you candidly, sometimes I do not know. I am like a Christian who begins to doubt, and it hurts me."

"Then Mr. Pickens influenced you."

"No. You."

"I? Why, I am a Strynite."

"Oh, yes. In theory. You live in luxury, and find it interesting to say that, but in reality every feature of your face, every curve to your frame, demands voluptuous ease."

"Why should that alter your opinion?" asked Theodosia.

"You make me imagine I really want what you have. You cause me to be discontented. You compel me to value what you like. Ever since I saw

you, Miss Peyton, I have been at times a hypocrite and it stung like a first sin. I have stood before my men, reiterating my old belief, while your face arose before me telling me I was insincere. I was a warrior with my right arm wounded. I have grown to fear you, Miss Peyton. I should have continued to refuse to know you, for you have weakened my confidence in myself. When I look at you, the highest possible product of civilization of the ninetenth century, and the luxury by which you are surrounded, you and it are what I desire. Is it strange that I doubt myself, and at times execrate all that keeps me from you?"

It was too soon. Theodosia preferred Stryne as a hero. Nevertheless, her eyes much softened, extending her hand, she said to him, "But I believe in you so absolutely, Mr. Stryne. You must have faith in yourself."

"That is my only recompense, Miss Peyton. I feel, since I have become weaker, I am dependent upon your faith. Good God, to rely upon a woman! Isn't it pitiful? No, I will not. I must have my own power. You must give it back to me, Miss Peyton. Promise that you will never speak to me when we meet again. I have the force not to seek you, but I can not refuse when you ask me to come. Observe me, the coward, begging temptation to flee.

This was the end I dreaded and feared. If ever man was iron, if ever man was rock, it was I. Oh, the quicksilver of sex!"

"You are morbid, Mr. Stryne; I can not make that promise, for we are going to be friends."

"Friends! how ludicrous! Make no mistake, Miss Peyton. You can inspire any other emotion but that. No, we are going to be enemies. I shall give you back your belief in me and be myself."

Stryne moved his chair more closely to Theodosia and then gravely asked, his features set with grim determination, "Did it ever occur to you as strange that you know nothing of me?"

"Why, I do know you." Theodosia was startled.

"Oh, yes, you know a man Paul Stryne, at this moment the leader of the Working Men in San Francisco, but you have no knowledge of me."

"That is true. Who are you?"

"God knows. I've asked him often enough to tell me. I've stared in the faces of men and women of two continents begging, 'Are you my father? are you my mother?' For years every hour I have studied race characteristics. I said to myself, 'Does that belong to the Saxon or the Latin?' I have lived in so many lands that I have a few of the marks of each nation, but no complete development. I am still a mystery to myself."

Theodosia leaned back in her chair and pondered. Then she started and said:

"Your name, Paul Stryne, that should convey something to you."

"That is not my name."

Theodosia was a wax figure of astonishment. Her chair moved a bit from Stryne.

"What is, then?"

"I can not say."

"Where did you get it?"

"I stole it, Miss Peyton."

Smiles left the features of Theodosia, and alarm parted her lips. "But you know the beginning of your life, your childhood?"

"Yes, my childhood. As you understand it, I had none; but, Miss Peyton, I will tell you about it. It is not a nice story, and will place us far apart.

"My earliest recollection is of going with a heavy, sunbrowned woman from house to house and pleading for food. Think of the handicap of a soul scarred with beggary. I called this woman mother in our tongue, the language of the Gipsies. There were half a dozen children of us, my brothers and sisters. Two or three men smoked all day in the tents and I did not know which was my father.

"We never stopped long in one place, but my first memory recalls thickly settled New England. I will

pass over the hideousness and brutality of that daily life and tell you how I came to leave it, for I became ashamed of it, and I awoke. We were encamped near a suburb of New York, and Sunday I strolled into the village. Perhaps I was eleven or twelve, for I do not know my age. I caught a glimpse of a girl larger and older than myself with thick yellow curls about her shoulders. I have never seen any like them until that night you opened the door and stood before me. She was with a servant, I fancy, and going to church. I had never entered a house of worship, but I followed her and was detained by the usher in the back seat. The service was quite strange to me and all I recollect was the movement of the yellow curls far down in front.

"I waited until she came out and walked behind her to her home, a great big brick mansion in a square of trees and shrubbery. I had never realized before that there was anything particularly wrong with myself. I looked in a shop window and saw reflected my shaggy rough hair, my dirty face, and my bare feet.

"Then I went straight to the river bank and washed my body clean and lay in the sun until I was dry. I had commenced to think about myself, and that, I take it, is the beginning of improvement. Upon returning to the camp I compared my own

features with those of my companions. The other children of the camp might have been born of my mother, but I realized with a flash that I was not her child. No man there could possibly have been my father. I told them so, and they, caring only for the pittance I could beg for them, were too indifferent to deny it. I ran away."

Theodosia was coldly interested. "Mr. Stryne, where did you go?"

"I walked for three days to Trenton, New Jersey, and begged my food on the way. When I knew I was beyond the reach of the camp I found work with a doctor, Paul Hamilton. He allowed me to read when I had leisure and in a short time I devoured and digested many good and bad books. At last I came upon the life of Napoleon Bonaparte, and it was the only volume which ever kept me awake all night. I read it, feeling it beyond credence. When morning came, I crept into Dr. Hamilton's office, and asked, 'Is it all true?' 'Yes,' he answered. 'Every word?' 'Of course.' 'I'm so glad,' said I. 'I was afraid it was a novel.' After that I read more lives of Napoleon and became familiar with everything that history tells. I even pinched my companions' ears as he did.

"Once I was playing with some boys of my own size, and we found a vine bearing scarlet and gold

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leaves. I made a crown of them, placed it on my head, and named myself Emperor of the French. The following day my brow was swollen with a band of red flesh. The physician said that the leaves of which I wove the crown were poisonous. I became ill from fever and tore off the scarf of skin. That left the scar on my brow, the first that ambition gave me."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Theodosia, genuinely moved.

"During my sickness they told me I called 'St. Helena.' 'To St. Helena.' When I recovered it was as if the delirium continued, for the word St. Helena sounded in my ears from dawn till dusk. I was determined to go there, and I left a message with my employer, 'I have started for St. Helena.'

"On my way down the streets of Trenton, I thought of a name for myself. At first I considered Paul Hamilton, that of my employer. Presently I saw the name Stryne on a door-plate. It pleased me, for, like myself, it expressed nothing. I became Paul Stryne. Why not? I must have a beginning. God did not give me any, and was it my fault that I made one for myself?"

"Of course there is no reason why you should not bear any name you wish," answered Theodosia; "but it is so strange actually to know some one who has no family, no name, no tradition, nothing."

"I am glad of it, Miss Peyton. My existence has been all my own," retorted he with an outburst of determination.

"Tell me, then what did you do?"

"My name, Paul Stryne, gave me manhood. I had a foundation. I did not beg; I worked, until at last I reached New York. The first thing I went down to where the ships docked. I wandered along the great wharves.

"Finally a sea-captain said to me, 'Well, my man, where are you bound for?' 'St. Helena,' I answered. He did not smile. At first I thought it a part of my fever when he replied, 'Come with us, then, we pass St. Helena.' Extraordinary as it may seem, no one directed me to that particular sailing vessel. The next day we left New York. There is nothing to tell about the voyage except that I read and stole."

"Stole, Mr. Stryne! How horrible!"

"Yes, I read all the books there were to be had, and I stole everything each man knew. I recall a hundred childish devices for making the officers talk. I felt that I had been robbed of schooling, and an honest foundation, and so I must not rest until I squeezed dry the brains of all the men. This pirating of others' ideas, manners, and experiences began on that ship and lasted the entire voyage. It is

characteristic of my life. I have stolen everything which came within the grasp of my mind. I claim the right, for I was robbed of a beginning.

"We barely touched at St. Helena, but I wept at the sight of Longwood. I arrived in Liverpool, a strange country, with a new name, a new life before me. My policy was to do as little work as I could and read as much as possible. I asked nothing but my board and clothes. Then I studied and waited —for what I could not have told you. I was unaware that I was industriously preparing for this movement in San Francisco, but I had a premonition that one day I should give out all that I was stowing away.

"I do not recollect anything that I disdained to learn, a little music, enough dancing, something about art, fencing, and shooting. I idled from one country to another, studying the people, the languages, the history, one day living with socialists, the next I was the servant of a potentate."

"Oh, Mr. Stryne, do not tell me that you were actually a servant," exclaimed she, making a grimace of repugnance.

"Often, Miss Peyton. What better method is there of learning the intelligence, the manner, and secrets of the great? To the observing it is an education."

"But it is not nice, it is not respectable."

"Recollect, I did not start to tell you a nice story, nor a respectable story, but a true story. I have spared you and myself many of the details. At best mine is but a life built upon dregs and decay. I had a certain number of years allotted me, and I was already late in the race. Should I lose or should I make short cuts? I made short cuts, for I had as much right to win as any one. Yet I was not insincere. I believed every principle I expounded because I knew it was right. I have met my kind in all climes and we are all alike. Other men take their thoughts from their beliefs, but we believe because we think, and thought with free action is democracy; with fettered power, it is anarchy. After I met you, Miss Peyton, the river was turned a little from its course, and sometimes I wondered if I uttered my doctrines because they pay, because from them and by them I am to build my life and future. Your cold eyes, your frozen features, tell me I was in error. Now the waters are back once more, flowing straight to their destination with a fury. I believe! I believe again! I believe every word I said."

The man's face was quite pale as he walked up and down the drawing-room, the red scars standing out like a blister. Theodosia, motionless in her chair, sat watching him as if he were a strange beast.

"You are unnecessarily emphatic about it, Mr. Stryne. No one has contradicted you."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Peyton, but you did."

"When? How?"

"When you appeared in the doorway the first night I saw you, showing me the startling contrast between my life and yours. When you came to the prison with your jewels and bonds. When you met me in your fresh young beauty on the street. When I saw you here in your home to-night. What is it you are always saying to me? That I don't believe my own words, that you are more precious than they. Let me assure you, I believe. I was never so confident of myself as at this moment. You and I were never so far apart as now."

Theodosia arose, looked at Stryne's agitated, quivering face. She was thrust from him by a thousand invisible forces. Yet as if duty forced her, she asked:

"Have I done anything wrong? I don't feel quite happy about it all."

"No, Miss Peyton. You have been most kind."

Stryne started to go out into the hall. Theodosia seemed to think aloud: "It is so strange to learn all this, Mr. Stryne. You were good to tell me, but I wish you had not. I was positive you are a gentleman."

His story produced the effect he intended, and yet it hurt him to see her so cramped and limited by prejudice. His success was too complete. It would have comforted him somewhat had she felt a little sympathy instead of mere disenchantment.

"No, only the valet of a gentleman," he answered. "You and I alone have knowledge of my entire life, Miss Peyton."

"And we shall continue to have, also. I can not express to you, Mr. Stryne, how much success you deserve," said she coldly, but still making a pretense of cordiality.

Stryne read from her unnatural manner that this was their farewell, and she wished him gone. It gave him courage to reply determinedly:

"I merit none, I am afraid, but I will have a great deal."

As he left the Peyton residence and swung open the heavy iron gate, Ruspoli met him and said:

"*Buona sera, Signore.*"

Stryne saluted without response.

Chapter XIV

STRYNE'S DICTATORSHIP

STRYNE had accurately estimated Miss Peyton's temperament. His confession dissipated her interest in him. She was somewhat shocked at her own mercurial temperament which could so quickly cease to consider the man whose mind had interested her more than any other's. Theodosia was positive, as she gladly saw the door close upon the socialist, that her shallow emotions approached heartlessness. She did not desire to be selfish, but she feared she was, for from her infancy the world had done its best to spoil her.

Colonel Peyton's daughter knew that, while she might be without heart, she possessed a sense of humor. By the time she reached her room, she felt she had been the victim of a joke. She laughed heartily at herself because with all her cleverness she had not detected the waif, the nobody, the Gipsy, and adventurer underneath stolen dignity.

Now that she considered it, of course no masquerading gentleman would don a red handkerchief, a scarlet-lined cape, and a huge felt hat.

What would Ruspoli say? She saw his eyes gleaming with repressed triumph. She could hear Adele and Percy Oglethorpe laughing. Jessie Traver would be so maliciously witty about it that it would pay for her dinners during several seasons. It was really funny and she should have known better, but she charged it to the account of experience.

Theodosia was slightly contemptuous of Stryne. Struggling in the fetters of her dead mother's mind, she made the declaration to herself that she did not like a man unless he was a gentleman. Then she realized that, no matter how dull Percy Oglethorpe was and despite Ruspoli's indolent indifference to the great purposes of life, they were more her equals than Stryne.

"I should be above all this," she said. "No doubt Mr. Stryne deserves some credit because he made his way quite unassisted, but I'm just a commonplace woman after all, pretending to be better than the others. I am a snob, and I can not help it. I never want to see him again."

Immediately she thought, without even mentioning Ruspoli's name to herself, "How handsome he was. At that moment of his indignation he was a prince. I should not like to see him often like that." Then she wrote him a note of apology in Italian and an invitation to ride with her the following morning.

At eight o'clock the next day a messenger with a huge bouquet of orchids awoke her. Concealed in them was a note which closed with, "You have brought me back from death." When he arrived, his haggard face showed her that he had not exaggerated. His voice broke in the greeting, and then he remained silent until they reached the park, when he discussed the general topics of society. Neither of them ever again referred to their first quarrel.

During the remaining weeks the Stryne movement developed each day. Country papers of both persuasions openly advocated the Working Men's party as the deliverer of the State. The city journals were non-committal and thereby revealed the strength of the new organization. All of Stryne's speeches were carefully reported. There was too much talk of him in clubs, saloons, lodges, on the ferry-boats, trains, and street cars for them to offend so large a body of men.

The New York papers and periodicals devoted pages to his characteristics, daily life, and the "sand-lot" meetings. The London Times sent one of its best writers to San Francisco, and he amazed England with his account of Strynism in California. The encyclopedias gave the agitator several columns of space.

From the Atlantic to the Pacific there was a con-

viction that California for many years to come would bow to the will of Paul Stryne. He seemed to think only of the immediate present and the result of the elections in the fall. Theodosia Peyton was in the gallery of his brain merely a blurred faded negative.

Four hours' sleep from campaigning sufficed the metallic force of the man. Many of the writers feared he would collapse before the nominations took place, but those who looked at his square chin, shoulders, and neck knew that he was a Titan of iron. To be sure he gave out daily a complete life's energy, but there was undiscovered, untouched power always in reserve for the day of need.

One could feel and breathe his success in walking down the street. None was so blindly prejudiced as to doubt it. Even those who hoped his triumph was not to be were positive of it. The worship of his followers was at white heat. His words had flamed from his lips, igniting them all, and they pointed to the red scar on his brow as the symbol of victory. It was a sign from heaven.

Theodosia was kinder to Ruspoli, and in consequence of his happiness he did not mention that he saw the agitator enter and leave her house the evening of the dinner. Colonel Peyton asked his daughter why she abandoned her fad for socialism and Stryne.

"Don't talk to me about it, dearest old boy. We always loathe our passions after they are exhausted."

The lawyer took several of the girl's curls in his hand and said, "Theodosia, a woman with hair like that should never make a vow, for she will break it."

It is only when the results of election are foregone conclusions that nominations are so hotly sought as in this campaign of Stryne's. In his hands lay the responsibility of naming the State and city officials. Even the choice of United States Senator was to be fixed by him. Throughout these weeks his quiet, his calm, his dignity, his poise, bore an excellent likeness to greatness. The scar shone like a crown, for Stryne knew how to rule.

During this period he refused invitations from all houses in San Francisco that one would care to enter. Those who had no needs themselves, desired something for their friends. Perhaps it was a judgeship for a lawyer. It might be an ambitious mother bringing her first-born to the feet of Stryne and dedicating him seriously with tears and prayers to the service of his country as a statesman. Aspirants for the mayoralty, governorship, and Supreme Court came supplicating, commanding, or threatening, according to expediency. Then there were the great, far-reaching corporations with tentacles on every nugget and jewel in California. They came using

diplomacy and endeavored to persuade Stryne that it was for the good of the commonwealth, the best interests of the State, and his own complete happiness, that every position to be given out should be handed over to them.

Stryne listened to the Walsinghams as politely as to the McCanns. His face was quite impassive, and his deep-set gray eyes stared into the secret caverns of their brains. He received opinions, asked questions about their principles, affiliations; then answered that nothing as yet was decided, and dismissed them. Undoubtedly he was a most irritating person to control.

The chief of the Working Men's party assumed somewhat the attitude of a general planning a campaign with wooden soldiers. Often an imposing cavalryman, because of a blemish, was swept off the board, utterly regardless of his pride. An obscure, unknown private was raised to command because his manner and his character pleased Stryne. Then when it seemed that all was arranged satisfactorily, the leader brushed them to the floor and set them up again according to his will.

Diogenes had difficulty in finding one honest man. Frequently Stryne groaned in his sleep at the thought that he must fill the offices of the city and State with them. Where were the Diogenes of the nineteenth

century to seek them? As he was opposing every powerful interest, it was necessary that he make no mistake. He could not afford the extravagance.

At last the word came to him like the whisper of inspiration—Youth! Youth! No gray hairs shamed by compromise with evil, wise with the world's wisdom and calloused by dead hopes should mar his success. No, he would choose Youth, aflame with enthusiasm, Youth bold from ignorance, Youth honest from quickening ideals, Youth daring from ambition. The sap of Youth should be injected into the decaying politics of the State and revive them.

So the word went out to the unknown, the obscure, that there were great prizes for them, and all Stryne demanded was that they be honest. The day of the convention drew near and the prophets found neither in the sky nor on the wall handwriting telling of the man to be chosen. No one but Stryne knew, and he was mute. It was an exciting conundrum.

The solution of the puzzle occupied most active minds in the city, and the day before the nominations even Colonel Peyton's household was interested therein. For a time Stryne had been merely an impostor, an adventurer to Theodosia. She felt that he had no business to endeavor to act like a gentleman. Presently this feeling faded into utter indifference. She took up amusement and he passed into

oblivion. When the great wave of his popularity swept over the State, she suddenly recollected that she had known him. She despised herself as she mentioned the fact with a certain degree of pride to some visitors who inquired concerning him.

Once, while driving, she passed the sand-lot, and saw him, a bronze figure of power, enthralling thousands, and she was surprised that she still admired him. During this separation she had imagined that if she were again to see him, he would resemble nothing but a mountebank; yet, in spite of all she knew of his past, he looked like a gentleman. What a pity that he was not!

The great day neared and the city and State were prostrate before the socialist. With pleasure Theodosia recalled his words to her. She felt that this vast multitude was kneeling before her, for she might have made him love her had she chosen. At last she admitted that she could not separate Stryne's power from him, any more than a man can distinguish between a woman's beauty and her soul. He was no longer an adventurer. He had become as great as the might which the people accorded him.

The day before the nomination, Theodosia discussed with some friends and her father the probable results of the meeting of the delegates.

"I have never seen a convention. I think I shall go to the Working Men's to-morrow," said she.

"I fancied you were tired of socialism, Theodosia," remarked Colonel Peyton.

"Miss Peyton, I rather imagine you had chucked Stryne," said Oglethorpe.

"I am merely interested in the political convention," answered Theodosia.

"Stryne is the convention," suggested Adele.

"Do you think it possible, Signorina," asked Ruspoli, "for a lady to be interested in a principle? Is that not generally another name for a person?"

"You understand Italian women, *mon Prince*, but not Americans. I do not see why you should all be so distressed about my getting out of my little rut for a few hours. I am going to the convention."

"With whom?" asked Adele.

"Daddy Peyton!" was the answer.

"No, Theodosia, it would hardly be consistent for me to attend."

"Then I shall take you—Adele, and Percy, and—Prince Ruspoli."

Chapter XV

THE WORKING MEN'S CONVENTION

HE delegates of the Working Men's party assembled in the old California Theater, and the nomination of the greatest importance to be made was that of Governor of the State. One half of those present toiled with their hands. The other, professional men, ambitious politically, merely came into the party because they were confident it would be successful.

The representatives of the Working Men with whom Stryne determined to reform the political and public morals of California were neither more honest nor more intelligent than those occupying like positions generally are. It was among the young men that the hopes of the leader lay.

The theater was packed with a mass of grim-looking delegates, bearing banners showing the counties represented. In the half daylight they were not pleasant to look upon. A few women were seated in the first balcony, their gay garments varying the gloom of black coats. In the upper right-hand box were Miss Peyton and her guests. The other loges

were filled with friends of the heads of the Working Men's party. On the stage were men about to make speeches. Yet no one cared to see them. There was a stretching of necks to select Stryne from among them, and several men were designated, but his friends knew that he had not yet arrived. There was no delay, and at half after ten the convention was called to order by the Chairman.

Theodosia's eyes were glassy from excitement over the novelty of the experience, and even Adele Whiting was interested. She had tired of most forms of entertainment. Theodosia wore a silver-gray cloth gown and a large hat with plumes falling away from the front backward. It was the style that suited her and she realized it. She had as a corsage bouquet a huge bunch of violets given her that morning by Ruspoli. They were the only flowers she wore during the day.

Adele Whiting said: "It is strange Mr. Stryne is not here. Why, I expected to see him in the center of the stage."

"Not at all," answered Percy Oglethorpe, who was making a study of politics in the United States. "We can now observe an illustration of the free choice and will of the people uncontrolled by 'bosses.' Stryne is not here, Miss Whiting, because it is more artistic to be absent."

"For my part," remarked Theodosia, "I do not see how Mr. Stryne can control the convention unless he is present."

"He will be absent, nevertheless, Miss Peyton, and nothing will occur against his will."

The reading of the platform was heard with the indifference which attends platforms both before and after election. Other routine work was accomplished in the same perfunctory manner. All were waiting the first nominations. The hour arrived for placing names before the delegates. Still the opinion of the convention was not crystallized as to the possible candidate. Still Stryne was absent.

Los Angeles, in language bedecked with garlands of the Southland, presented the name of Everett, who was destined from the cradle to rule the State. The candidate was received with violent enthusiasm and he doubted not that he would be the choice of the party.

Johnston, of Sonoma, was placed before the delegates by one of his admirers, positive that his aspirant was the man representing the principles of Strynism. Johnston had been advocating them for years and could best carry out the reforms of their leader. This nominee was more warmly welcomed than the Los Angeles man. Yet even Theodosia realized that the right note of enthusiasm to sweep the convention was not yet struck.

San Francisco nominated Senator McCann, and all wondered at the uproars of approval with which his name was met. Either he was a strong candidate or he had friends with powerful throats. An old gray-haired boss, who had lived his day and now passed his time in attending conventions, shook his head.

"No, he won't do. South of the Tehachapi they will slaughter him. You can't make those hard-headed, hard-fisted Yankees vote for McCann. His name kills him."

San Bernardino and Los Angeles put forth additional budding Governors, for the southern part of the State furnishes as many office-seekers as oranges. The delegates screeched themselves hoarse, and each man had the appearance of being the really only desirable possibility for the position.

Finally, Senator McCann, amiable, florid, and smiling, with the fat of his neck bulging over the back of his collar in wrinkles, was recognized by the chairman. As unlike a martyr physically as the imagination could picture, McCann, almost moved to tears by the nobility of his own sacrifice, nevertheless announced that he withdrew his name in favor of Schuyler Van Ness.

Not a fifth of the men knew the lawyer mentioned. The others had heard of him as a cold, stern, just young man with sufficient heritage to maintain the

most scrupulous honesty. He was a friend of Theodosia, Adele, and one of the eligible young men of San Francisco. Altho he disapproved of Stryne's violent methods, he felt that something should be done to improve conditions in California. Consequently in a decorous, well-balanced manner he gave his support to Strynism, the only remedy.

By birth and education his sympathies were not with the laboring classes, yet when McCann withdrew in favor of Van Ness, they heard the voice of their absent leader speak. They knew that Stryne had chosen Van Ness in spite of his cold exterior because he was honest, because he would give them justice. It was the first signal in the convention from their leader, and then they went wild.

The horns, the bells, the waving of flags, the throwing of banners and hats into the air, the cries from the heart of the rejoicing savage, all were reserved for this moment. Stryne, by an electric unsyllabled word had addressed them. It was a time for embraces, for tears, for huzzas, for laughter—for anything he willed.

What did it matter that Van Ness was a conservative? He was a symbol of the Working Men's party. He was honest. He believed in Stryne. He was the man to kneel before. He was to be the next Governor of California.

Van Ness was torn from his seat among the delegates, dragged over the foot-lights, and placed before the convention—a polite, frozen, well-poised person, with blue eyes and brown, pointed beard, the last man in the world to arouse enthusiasm. Yet he bore the halo of Stryne about his head and they were blinded by it. They seemed to see their leader's features shining in the light surrounding Van Ness.

The nominee for Governor could not speak. He was able only to bow. There were cries of "Speech!" but they were drowned by the outburst of cheers, and another pandemonium reigned.

Theodosia waved her handkerchief. Adele Whiting applauded. Ruspoli was pale and faint from the excitement. Oglethorpe remarked: "We all like a jolly good row, don't we? We don't care a hang what it is about either, so long as it is an out and outer. I am sure I came to this affair merely to oblige you, Miss Peyton, and here I am perspiring as if I were a Working Man."

Van Ness signaled silence and no heed was given. At last the men wore themselves out and stillness came from exhaustion. The nominee began speaking:

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the convention:"

At this point some one yelled—"Who is to be the next Governor of California?" From the throats of

the great hardy men came the mighty voice—"Schuyler Van Ness." The speaker waited for an opportunity to continue, and presently it came.

"None of us, gentlemen, has been long in public life and so we are not so well known to each other as we should be. However, we have the same sympathies. Your friend Stryne is my friend, the friend of all who believe the poor man is as good as the rich, and should have equal privileges. It is this bond which will always hold us together, will ever bind those who endeavor to uplift humanity.

"For Governor of California, we need an honest man, with a spotless conscience and pure character, a man of force, a man of individuality, a man who has the ability to look at the sun in the morning and know what is best for the State. Above all, we need a man of heart, a man overflowing with kindness and genuine love for the good of our commonwealth."

It was at this point that the audience became restless. The men felt they could no longer endure this self-eulogy. A delegate tittered at the word "heart."

"There is but one man of my acquaintance," went on Van Ness, "who entirely fills my idea of what a Governor should be, who has that nicely balanced sense of honesty, of right, of lofty purpose. You will all agree with me, I am convinced, when I tell

you that it is your friend and my friend, Paul Stryne. Gentlemen of the convention, I resign whatever claims you have bestowed upon me and place him in nomination. Gentlemen, the next Governor of California, Paul Stryne!"

Theodosia had already seen enthusiasm, but not this wild, uncontrolled idolatry and man-worship which burst forth. It was the cry of the mother for her child, the howl of the beast for her young, the passion of a lover for his mistress expressed by a thousand voices. All was for Stryne. Theodosia felt a chill that held her frozen. Her teeth chattered and the tears stole down her cheeks. Ruspoli, from the deep caverns of his dark, smoldering eyes, gazed at her.

The leader was absent. They were not inspired by his face. They were not impassioned by his voice. Yet his spirit, his personality stirred them to the wildest excesses of emotion. None before had realized the depths and might of the torrent to sweep them out of reason into a chaos of madness. No absinthe could have intoxicated as did the name of their hero. It was clear that none but he had ever possessed a chance of being Governor.

Theodosia's party felt that the strain was becoming too acute for endurance. It was like endeavoring to retain reason in a madhouse. Suddenly there was a

great roar and men leaped on the seats, sat on each other's shoulders, and screamed.

There was a blur of towsled hair, staring eyes, wide-opened lips, and wax-like faces. Stryne walked down the center of the stage.

He waved his hand and silenced them as if using a mighty wand. His countenance was severe, his brows lowered, and his coat was buttoned straight to his chin. The speaker's voice had never fallen so gently on his followers' hearing. Harshness and dissonance were displaced by something like tenderness.

"Friends, men of San Francisco and the State of California: I am surprised, I am hurt, and yet I am gratified. I am surprised that we have been together all these months and you do not know me. How many times have I said to each of you publicly and privately as well, that my mission is here with you as one of the active workers. I care nothing for the shoulder straps and epaulets of life. They do not suit me.

"I am hurt that you, that my friend Van Ness, have fancied even for a second that my labor in our cause had any other end in view than that of wiping out evil. Political preferment is an honorable ambition; but, my friends, you must understand always that you can not pay me. My hire is in the doing. Schuyler Van Ness is a gentleman. His integrity

can never be questioned. He stands for everything cherished by us. All of these candidates are my friends, excellent citizens, but for this particular occasion he seemed to be the man. It was like his generosity to give way to me, but this impulse must be unheeded. It is my will and I think it is yours and that of the people of the State, that he be the next Governor of California.

"To say that I am without pleasure in the honor you give me, would be false. I am stirred by depths of gratitude as when often in the past you showed your loyalty, your friendship. From my innermost heart I thank you for the honor, but I must remain in the ranks with you."

Stryne bowed to the entire audience, from the highest gallery to the pit. In this movement he included the boxes and his sight fell upon Theodosia leaning over the edge of her loge with gaze fixed upon his face, her ears straining to catch each word. Their glances met and flashed recognition, whereupon Theodosia hurled quickly the bouquet of violets which Ruspoli had given her, at Stryne's feet. He picked it up, smiled grimly, and again bowed to her box.

None but her friends noticed the act. Ruspoli arose from his seat, walked the length of the anteroom leading to the loge, and returned to find Miss

Peyton oblivious of the presence of all except Stryne and the men surrounding him, wringing his hands, slapping his back, and shouting their approval. They resembled nothing so much as a horde of Wall Street brokers when values are rising.

Finally the nomination of Van Ness was made and carried. An adjournment being effected, Stryne was given another ovation and reception. Men and women crowded upon the stage to touch his coat, to clasp his hand. When nearly all had departed, Theodosia and her party appeared. Her eyes were still humid as she walked quickly across the stage ahead of her guests and said to Stryne, giving him her hand: "I'm so proud of you, Mr. Stryne. You were splendid. You were superb. Can we never be friends again?"

"Is it you or a caprice speaking, Miss Peyton?"

"I."

"Then your question is worth all the trouble it gave me to bring it about."

"You do not mean you deliberately arranged the scene we just saw."

"That is my secret. I will only say that I realized what was going to happen and why."

"Why did it occur?"

"First, because it was right, and second, that a Gipsy might crown himself before a lady's eyes.

Miss Peyton, the latter result alone remunerated me for the struggle. I am prouder of that than because I refused the nomination."

"Are we to be friends?"

"No, Miss Peyton," said he with unmistakable meaning, as he shook his head and a smile curved his lips.

"When will you come to see me?"

"When you wish," answered Stryne.

Chapter XVI

THE ARTIST OF LOVE

HE evening following the convention Colonel Peyton was reading in his library, from whose walls protraits of departed distinguished Peytons of Virginia looked calmly down upon him. There was a governor, an admiral, a general, and an ambassador. The sight of these old faded figures had sustained the family through many a crisis, and Colonel Peyton was never quite forgetful of their presence.

At that very moment Theodosia was alone with Ruspoli in the oriental tapestried drawing-room. Crimson and gold flowers nodded their drowsy heads from rare slim-necked vases. Lights shone through the red shades of heavy bronze candelabra. Incense burned in an old Chinese urn.

Theodosia occupied a window seat piled high with cushions. She wore a simple black gown of tucked net with a silver girdle of large turquoises. The curls of her hair clustered about her shoulders adding to their beauty. Her bare arms were distinctly outlined against the black of her gown. One foot,

the smallest, best-shaped foot in the city, shod with the pointed toe, high-heeled tip of a black velvet slipper, rested on a cushion lying upon the floor. It seemed to be there for no other purpose than to show Ruspoli its beautiful white self, gleaming through the black silk gauze network of a stocking. Yet Theodosia, this night looked but a school girl, unconscious and ignorant that her foot was quite near Ruspoli, who half reclined upon cushions lying on the carpet.

When alone with her the prince begged the privilege of sitting at her feet. He was the only man who could kneel with sufficient grace to retain her respect. When he was in this posture, in spite of all her Americanism she forgot that he was merely a handsome, graceful, dark-eyed pale Roman with an indolent dreaming mind. As he knelt before her she saw his well-chiseled, modern, aristocratic features, but behind him were warriors, diplomats, magnificent princes, resounding glories, powerful brains, and triumphs of history, the throne, Humbert of the White Hands, and Charlemagne. In her vision these great shades were her supplicating lovers. They were a novelty worth guarding.

Her blue eyes were looking straight toward and miles beyond the end of the room. Her cheeks were pink with the excitement of the day. Ruspoli

watched her face for several minutes, hoping that she would notice him, but her gaze ignored his presence. Still he looked up at her.

Finally he whispered as if fearing to disturb a sleeper:

"Signorina!" She heard him not.

His fists became resolute and his teeth bit together.

"Signorina, I am jealous of your thoughts." Theodosia found the horizon interesting.

"Signorina, I love thee."

Theodosia remarked, without moving an eyelash:

"I suppose you do, but don't talk about it tonight."

The Italian leaned on his elbow, and, looking at her keenly said: "I am angry. You never objected before."

"Really? Well, it's quite time then. Love and lovers are very silly—that is, if one has anything better to think about."

"I'll do anything you say, Signorina, to make myself worthy of consideration. What do you suggest?"

Theodosia looked at the Italian. "Cease being a mere indolent, supplicating lover, and work."

"Ah, Signorina, that is not Theodosia, given of the gods, speaking, but the American, the Yankee. Work? Why, it is mere destruction, death—a ne-

cessity for the unfortunate. What shall I do? What can I do? Everything that is worth while was accomplished long ago by my countrymen. You would not have me so ridiculous as to write a poem when Father Dante completed poetry in 1300? Would you counsel me to the impertinence of art after Angelo? Should I throw for the fortunes of war after our young Corsican Bonaparte has made pygmies of all heroes of history? What is there for me to do in a world so finished? All has been perfected but love. It is the only incomplete art and it shall be mine alone. Is it not noble? Is it not beautiful? Is it not worth one's life? I have given mine to it, Signorina, and at thy feet I place it."

Theodosia did not glance at him.

"Ah, Signorina, I am happy that I never exhausted the life of my soul in aught so stupid as work. I have drawn upon its blood for naught but dreams which richened its red. The song I did not sing, the picture I did not paint, the poem I did not write, the battles I did not fight, are in my soul's love for thee, dearest lady."

Theodosia looked at the Italian half reclining on the rug, his eyes filled with ancient tragedy, tenderness, and passion, his lips slightly parted. With a gesture of the hand he was about to touch hers. Ruspoli was undeniably handsome. Stryne possessed

only moments of beauty. Ruspoli was a gentleman. Stryne was an adventurer. Every thought of the prince's existence was for her. The socialist threw her out of his mind at will. Again the glory, history, and triumphs of the heroes of the oldest reigning house in Europe trooped before her eyes. It was pleasant to be loved by Ruspoli. The fire of his words warmed her pulses. She was tempted to allow the caress, but she drew her hand away.

The Prince sank back into his place while Theodosia stirred in her seat and returned his gaze. "Signorina, I pray thee, let me love thee. *Dio mio!* I will teach thee love. Thou who hast lived among restraint and Saxon icebergs, what doest thou know? Nothing. Yet it is in thy sleeping eyes and thy sleeping soul to feel all the fire of my race."

His glance fixed hers and held it. She caressed him with her eyes. He crept toward her and she did not repel him. "Dearest Signorina, thou must love me. *Dio mio!* to hear thee say those words, '*Alessandro, Io t'amo.*' It is too exquisite. My heart stops, dearest lady, at the thought of touching thy hand, thy lips."

He took his eyes from hers, for he covered his face with his hands. This act shook her free from his glance, and she moved to a corner of the window seat.

"Am I too daring, Signorina?" began he. "Canst thou not love me?"

"No, Prince."

"You gave me your eyes, yourself, a moment ago. What did they say? Nothing? Do not hurt me by evasion. Honor me with a direct answer."

Theodosia considered carefully. "I was fascinated for the instant by your magnetism."

"And now?"

Theodosia shrugged her shoulders.

"Only fascinated? This moment I am nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Signorina, was not that which you call fascination the beginning of love?"

"Oh, dear, no," laughed she.

"You are indifferent then?" The question was not worth a response. Theodosia pursed up her lips and shook her head in the affirmative.

"Then may I ask, Signorina, why you keep me here?"

"I? Keep you?" exclaimed she naively, with a series of rising slides.

"Yes, you keep me. You have held me all these months. Why do you not send me away?"

Theodosia was eloquent in self-defense.

"Because you want to stay, and I am a kind-hearted person, too kind, almost weak, and I allow

you to remain. I think I am very good but you do not appreciate it."

"There were men who desired as much as I to remain. You dismissed them all. Why do you not send me away?"

Theodosia attempted to frown her smooth white brow in contemplation. "Because you speak Italian so beautifully and it improves my accent."

The Prince was now at her feet, regarding her with intense, half-closed eyes. "That is not an answer," said he. "Why do you not send me away?"

Theodosia was driven into a corner. "I refuse to be questioned. I never allowed any one to catechize me. At the age of twenty-one, Theodosia Peyton, the head of her father's household for four years, will not permit cross-examination."

Her white arms were folded across her breast. The tangle of yellow curls were tossed over her left shoulder. Breath came quickly, and she was tapping her slippered lace-covered foot. Ruspoli leaned back and said decisively: "I have spent a year's time, and I have earned the right again to ask—why don't you send me away?"

"Very well, I will tell you. Because I like you."

The Italian shook his head. "There is no such word as like for us. It can not be spelled by you and me. It is love or nothing."

"Good. It is nothing. You can never complain of me again. Go!"

The prince raised himself slowly to his feet, his eyes fixed sadly on Theodosia. He walked to the hall door still regarding her, then bowed. She said, "*Buona sera,*" and picked up a book of poems. Ruspoli looked at her again and rushed quickly back to her side.

"I can not, Signorina. You know it as well as I. I have quite lost my manhood. I should not have waited for dismission, but my limbs and mind are paralyzed. They will not obey me. My future, my past, is blotted out. There is just one moment in existence. Despise me when I tell you that it is this here with you. You do not love me I see. You could not care and be so cruel, but it does not matter; I want to remain and never go. Do not send me away again."

"You silly boy!" said she, as he nestled his head among the cushions close to her like a punished child. Her cheeks almost touched his brow and her fingers tingled to caress his hair and comfort him. Prudence moved her too into the corner of the window seat.

"Signorina, you are a little happy that I did not go, are you not?"

"It is always unpleasant to separate," said she softly.

"Yes, and say to me that this separation would have meant something to you."

Theodosia felt that the tone of her voice was too much like his, so she answered in a matter-of-fact way:

"Must I repeat? Parting is always disagreeable —a remark centuries old."

"Do not make it so general. Let me imagine it is for me." Then, after a pause, "Have you been happy to-day, Signorina?"

"Very."

"All that socialistic babel gave you pleasure?"

"A great deal."

"Then if you were content, how could you do what you did?"

Theodosia was genuinely surprised. "I do not understand. What was it? Pray, tell me, Prince."

"You do not recollect?"

"Oh, I had my first experience in a political convention."

"God knows that was bad enough, Signorina, and it grieved me. I thought you had forgotten all the ridiculous, impractical, anarchistic theories of Stryne. It was sufficiently painful to accompany you, but that was not the great humiliation."

Theodosia was curious. "Which was?"

The prince grew ill at ease.

"It was such a small thing to you, yet it meant so much to me. I have been sick at heart all day long."

"Why? Because I went ahead and spoke to Mr. Stryne?"

"No," retorted he, his thick black brows uniting in one horizontal line, "not that. This morning I sent you some violets—nothing at all—but they were for you, and not for your friend Stryne or whatever his name may be."

"Don't be so ridiculous as to be jealous, Prince."

"Call it anything you wish, but the entire morning I said under my breath, 'She wears my violets. I am so joyous.' Signorina, it was a hot iron in my brain when you leaned over the edge of the loge, and from pure ecstasy threw them at Stryne."

"I suppose it afforded you pleasure, Prince, to give me the flowers. If, however, they are accompanied by restrictions, do not send them, or if you do, kindly write a note and state to what high, lofty purpose I may dedicate them."

"Pardon, but you understand as well as I, Signorina. You misinterpret purposely. I may be jealous; I am jealous, and I have reason to be. Perhaps you will call it selfishness, but I am more jealous of your honor than your love, and any one who touches it must answer to me. You will not then see me

dawdling at your feet, but you will see me as I am, an officer, a gentleman, a man, and your defender."

"Who has touched my honor?" asked Theodosia with blanching face.

"Stryne. I can not suffer to see you degrade yourself to a fellow like him, who only repays you by abusing your kindness, generosity, and confidence."

Ruspoli's head was thrown back on his shoulders, and his eyes were flaming.

"My confidence?" asked Theodosia in amaze.

"Yes, Signorina."

"Please give statistics, how, when, and where."

"No gentleman would presume to enter the house of a lady at half after ten and remain two hours as he did the night of the dinner you gave for him."

"He told you that, Prince?"

"No."

"Mr. Stryne said so to some one?"

"No, Signorina."

Then derision was transformed into laughter. "Oh, I understand now," said Theodosia slowly. "You saw him."

"Yes, Signorina. You know how often I watched the lights of your boudoir."

"You, *mon cher Prince*, were good enough to wait and play the spy. That is pleasant to know."

"You comprehend what your honor means to me."

Theodosia's lip curled. "Really I had not observed before, but now it is clear. We were talking a little while ago of occupations and you disdained all. Let me suggest one for you, *mon cher Prince*—be a detective. There is fabulous wealth in it for you."

"You insist upon being unjust, Signorina. It was only by accident that I met Stryne. I expected him to return immmediately, for I imagined he had forgotten something. I was presumptuous enough to be jealous. I passed two hours, my brain mad with a demon's fancies. At last he left you, and as we met I was a murderer. I know your impulses, your sympathies, and so I understand why you pardoned his insolence, but what would the world say?"

Theodosia's blue eyes were black.

"It will perhaps afford your sleuth's mind relief to know that Mr. Stryne came here at my solicitation, against his wish, and he took no liberty."

"He should have refused, Signorina."

"Being merely a man and not a prince, he came. As for what the world says, has said, or will say—it will always say nice things of me. The Peytons compel it whether the world wishes or not. Besides, you know the world has no detectives in its employ. It is only love—love, understand—that makes spies."

"I beg a thousand pardons, Signorina."

Ruspoli's head bowed. Theodosia was erect and the tenderness had departed from her expression.

"Not one shall be granted, Prince Ruspoli. You have done the unpardonable. I have been very kind to you. You bored me. You were often tiresome, but I have tolerated you, merely tolerated you. This is your return after my year of patience."

"I do not like to dispute with a lady, Signorina. I rarely do, but what you say is not true. Only your anger is speaking. I forbid you to repeat those words."

"You forbid me by the order of the King," answered she in mockery. *Dio mio!* That is droll. I should have said you were ludicrous, you were a bore; now I dislike you, I detest you, I hate you."

Theodosia felt thistles of fire in her eyes. Her voice broke and she was on the verge of tears. Ruspoli set his jaws together, half closed his dead eyes, braced his hand on the carpet, and said in a low, inflexible voice, little more than a whisper: "It is not true. Utter those words again and I will embrace you."

The girl could hardly credit her ears and leaned quickly toward him, clapping her hands together to mark emphasis: "You are a coward, Prince Ruspoli. I like Mr. Stryne very much. I think I could love him. I loathe you."

By accident in her excitement, Theodosia brought her pretty right foot directly down on his hand. Ruspoli would have been injured but he grabbed it quickly and prevented the shock. He held it in a terrible grip, bent and pressed his lips on the instep, then released it.

Directly he rose to his feet and she sprang upward in wrath. His features were rigid. "I warned you, Signorina."

Her cheeks and neck were crimson. She could scarcely choke out the words, "I want to use my hands. Oh, to be a man just to kill you!"

Ruspoli saluted her as he might have greeted his cousin, the Queen of Italy. Theodosia fled to the hall. The sight of her departing in anger melted the Italian's pride. He called out, leaping after her, "Signorina, pardon."

She turned on him, nostrils quivering, lips twitching, eyes blinking, and blinded with rage.

"Don't dare speak to me," she cried, her neck stretched to its full height. "Are you so dull you can not understand that our acquaintance is absolutely at an end?"

Chapter XVII

VIOLETS

TWENTY-FOUR hours passed and Theodosia heard nothing from Ruspoli. He had never before allowed so much time to elapse without making himself felt. At the close of another day she received news. Adele Whiting came to see her and said he had called that afternoon. It was her first experience with the gall of neglect, and she declared under her breath that she hated him. Wrath so furious as hers was soon spent. Unless she commanded imagination to recount and reiterate her wrongs, she found indignation subsiding into tepidity.

Theodosia asked Adele Whiting directly, "Tell me what you both said of me. I suppose you talked about nothing else."

"On the contrary, Theo. I referred to you often. It was only natural since you are my dearest friend, but each time I mentioned you Ruspoli preferred another subject. I don't know what to make of you and him. What have you done? I'm sure something naughty."

"I merely refused ever to meet the Prince again. I'm tired of him." Theodosia could not explain that he insulted her, for she realized that the chief fault lay in herself. Adele became embarrassed as she began, "The Prince asked mamma and me to drive with him to the Cliff to-morrow. I hope, Theo dear, you will not mind. I should have refused, I suppose, but the right thing never occurs to one until afterward. I didn't feel quite nice about going without first explaining to you. What shall I do?"

Theodosia turned a trifle pale and then smiled. "You foolish girl, go of course. I've cut Prince Ruspoli myself, but I don't ask my friends to do the same. I have no more concern in him than in a stranger."

"Still, I'm not exactly sure. I know he doesn't care a bit about taking me, but merely asks me because I am close to you."

"You are charming enough to be liked for yourself alone, Adele. You please him or he would not have invited you."

"If I only could straighten things out between you I should feel justified, but I don't think I ought."

"There is nothing to be straightened out, Adele. It is simply finished, and I am glad of it. Please go. I'm awfully anxious that you do," said Theodosia in

rising spirits. "Promise me that you will," insisted she as her friend departed.

During the afternoons in the seventies, the Cliff House was the objective point of the fashionable world. It had not yet been popularized by street-car lines. Consequently only those persons possessing leisure and carriages could go there. The Cliff became the mode, and every afternoon between the hours of three and six, dozens of conveyances containing San Francisco's handsomest and best-dressed women drove from the town to the ocean. Now they are scattered over two continents. Their beauty, their wit, and their admirers at this day are merely the folk-lore of old San Franciscans.

Ruspoli and the Whitings joined this throng. It was like the society of a village, for they nodded to the occupants of nearly every carriage. The Italian was extremely courteous to Mrs. Whiting, a stately, snowy-haired, blue-eyed woman, who had given her daughter none of her beauty. They talked of Italy where Mrs. Whiting had lived, and Ruspoli was so deferential that it seemed to the lady her girlhood had returned. Their carriage was turning into the road overlooking the ocean and leading to the Cliff House, when they noticed the tan livery of the Peyton footman and coachman.

Adele now understood why Theodosia begged her

to drive with Ruspoli. In a second they were facing Miss Peyton and Paul Stryne. Both greeted the Whitings with cordiality, but apparently the Prince was unobserved. Yet no break occurred in his voice and he picked up the sentence in the same intonation as before he paused to remove his hat. Later in the afternoon the Whitings observed that Ruspoli's spirits lagged.

That evening Colonel Peyton found his daughter most companionable. She had not been so gay in months. "You are too happy, Theodosia, to be natural. What is the matter?"

"I'm feeling the greatest of all joys, daddy—revenge."

"You imagine that, my girl. To-morrow you will be regretful. The pleasure of revenge is very short-lived. Never take it, for it is not worth while."

Theodosia refused to explain more, for she disdained the assistance of even her father in fighting her battles.

When she heard the bell ring the following morning, she was certain that it was a message from Ruspoli. She was wearing a white lace peignoir and just taking coffee. Victoire, her maid, brought a note and begged to know where she should place the violets. There were great boxes and baskets of them. Theodosia ordered them fetched to her.

Then she was alone with her letter. It was in Italian.

"I can not believe that after four days your anger is unreasonable. You are too kind and generous for that. So I venture to send you a few violets.

"These days of separation, dearest Signorina, are nothing to you, but I can not endure another. I must see you again, for your beautiful vision is the horizon of my heart and soul. The air of this city is intolerable if I am to be banished from your presence. If I can not be near you I must move. I am unable to endure the fetters of San Francisco. I must find action, something to express this terrible current of fire, seething within me.

"I will say anything you desire. You were kind, you were just. I was wrong. I supplicate, entreat the favor of five minutes' conversation with you, if only for *addio.* It is no idle lover's boast when I tell you that everything depends upon you. If I come this evening at half after eight, tell me shall I return to Italy or remain.

"RUSPOLI."

Theodosia wrote on a sheet of paper "Five minutes for *addio*," and the messenger left the house.

Presently she dismissed Victoire, and re-read the letter. White and purple violets filled the apartment with their aroma. Her head was burning and she

buried her face in a box of the flowers. Their moist petals cooled her cheeks. Then she took the blossoms into her arms and caressed them as a mother embraces a child. She lay on the couch and covered her entire form with loose violets. Finally her brain was dizzy from the scent.

Later Victoire returned and took away all but one basket to arrange in the Oriental drawing-room. She placed them in every corner, vase, urn, and on each tabouret and table it the apartment. When Theodosia entered it that evening on her way to dinner, the rich perfume penetrated her senses and made her giddy. It had been a long day and she dressed early for dinner because there was nothing else to do. She felt it an absurd coincidence that the hours stood still on this day of Ruspoli's departure. It gave him the importance of an event.

Theodosia strolled about the room, humming an air and looking at herself in mirrors. She had dressed with a special care, putting on her princesse gown of heavy cream silk. She looked at the white and pink flesh of her face, arms, and shoulders, her curls extending to her waist line, the rose of her lips, the blue of her large, clear, merry eyes, and shuddered as she realized that this gift of youth and beauty was hers for but a few years. In a decade it would be broken. In two of them, gone.

Then she threw out both arms convulsively and drew a deep, full breath. "Twenty years," said she. "What will happen in that time? I do not know, but I shall live every minute of them. When age, death, or anything horrid comes, life can not say I was cheated of a second."

Meditation arose from solitude, over-punctuality, and being obliged to wait, all three of which she resolved to avoid in the future. Then she chirped a gay French student song and pinned a great cluster of Ruspoli's violets in her hair. They were an improvement—royal purple on gold. Presently she fastened more of them on her left shoulder, some resting their heads on the flesh and others on her white band of a sleeve. They rendered her more beautiful and forced her to forget the pessimistic calendar.

A minute before half after eight Theodosia received the Prince's card. She was dreaming in the twilight of her room. She clasped on her wrist a pearl bracelet in which was set a small watch. After tossing one curl over her shoulder, arranging her violets, she sat in her chair and thought for ten minutes. Then she descended the stairway to Ruspoli.

The Prince was standing in the drawing-room, and apparently had been in the same attitude since his arrival. In his evening coat his shoulders seemed

broader than usual. His cheeks were as colorless as the bosom of his shirt. Eyes and hair glowed like jet. His well-defined, red lips, even tho unopened, spoke his thoughts. The girl looked at him an instant before the greeting. Ruspoli's features, bearing, and manner were so patrician, so thoroughly what a gentleman should be, that the artist in her must admire him.

He bowed profoundly, his heels together. No other man could convey such homage with a simple salutation. Every woman who received it felt it the highest flattery, because for the instant she seemed the only being of his thoughts.

Ruspoli's eyes followed Theodosia's movements. She approached him and frankly gave her hand. When he was seated near her he shook his head slightly, and blinked his eyes to pierce the mist filling them. His rigid, upright frame quivered.

"Remember," said Theodosia gently, "you must speak very rapidly, for you have but five minutes."

"Pray, do not remind me of that, Signorina. It is unnecessary." For the first time he observed the violets in her hair. Previously he had not taken his gaze from her eyes. Then he nearly smiled.

"You are very kind to wear them, Signorina. I thank you."

"Why not? They are beautiful."

"They are in your hair only because of their beauty? Tell me, I beg, that they are a token of your nobility, generosity, that I am almost forgiven, that I may remain."

Theodosia shook her head and looked at her bracelet.

"I said five minutes for *addio*, Prince."

"You will not be gracious? Am I not pardoned? Is this to be our separation, Signorina? Do you mean to tell me that I am nothing to you? Can you send me away after our year of friendship with no kind word? Was I so completely wrong?"

"We have no time for argument, Prince Ruspoli —only three minutes more."

"Have I ever offended you before, Signorina?"

"No. Once is sufficient."

"You demand that I submit to everything from you, that I be your slave?"

"I made no demands, Prince Ruspoli. You have acted always as pleased you."

"I know it, and I have been a serf. Do you suppose were I anything else I should have followed you a year? I have abased myself to the point where I can not resent insult. Mine was the kiss of a slave and you should consider it such."

"Thirty seconds are gone."

"This is the first time I ever sought a woman who

showed I displeased. It may be surprising to you, Signorina, but in other parts of the world I am not so utterly insignificant as here."

"I agree with you. Frankly you are charming, but let us not waste time discussing it, for only two minutes are left."

"You misinterpret my meaning. My intention, Signorina, was to explain that this is the first time I have been held by a woman as a person of no consequence. It is almost worth a trip to California."

"Pardon me for wounding your vanity, Prince."

"My vanity," stormed he rapidly in Italian. "*Dio mio*, my vanity! Do you suppose if I had an atom, a shadow, a trace of vanity, that I should sit here and beg you to show me the consideration you would grant a tradesman? Had I possessed vanity, Signorina, at the end of three weeks you would have loved me or I should have left you. It is the absence of vanity which holds me, pleading only that you will dismiss me kindly."

"That is a paradox. Women who send men away kindly do not send them at all."

"If you will be gentle I will go this minute, and I promise, Signorina, you shall never hear from me again. I will never tire you, bore you, or harass you, as you said that night. You meant it all, did you not?"

Theodosia's nose and mouth were hidden in the large bouquet of violets on her left shoulder. He could not see her eyes and scarcely distinguished the words, "Not quite all. You know I was angry."

"And you are not angry now, Signorina? Look at me."

Theodosia endeavored to be severe. "Of course I am, but I mean the other evening I was very, very angry. Now I am only very angry. You see there is a word's difference."

"You will always be angry?"

"Always," said she, burying her face in the violets.

Suddenly Theodosia started and looked at the watch in her pearl bracelet. "Oh," cried she, "your five minutes are passed, six minutes."

"Then you really mean *addio?*" asked he, as she again hid her countenance in the violets on her shoulder.

"Really," answered she in a smothered voice.

A look of intelligence flashed into his eyes. He arose to go. She accompanied him, saying,

"Those violets are delicious. I can not take my face from them. They are so fragrant."

"Not to say *addio?*"

"No, not even for that. They are intoxicating."

Ruspoli stood in front of her and she held out her hand, "*Addio*, Prince."

"I refuse to go, Signorina, unless you look at me."

Theodosia raised her head reluctantly and tried to smile, but on the right cheek was a tiny drop of water, the sum of all her woe—a tear.

Ruspoli lowered his face close to hers. Joy was in his eyes. He feared to mar his happiness by aught but a whisper:

"There is something on your cheek, Signorina, that looks like a tear."

"Oh, dear, no," she said quickly, laughing as she brushed it with her handkerchief. "It is merely the water from your violets."

"Pardon me, Signorina, but there are two drops of water on your left cheek."

"Those violets, Prince, are very wet."

"May I have them, Signorina?"

Theodosia concealed her face in their purple petals and answered, "No, they are mine."

"But I asked for the sake of *addio*."

"Your five minutes are gone."

"May I have the violets?" queried he, reaching for them? She unloosened them from her bodice, buried her face in them, and with bravery depicted on her countenance, gave him the flowers. Ruspoli looked at her steadily as she did so. Then he crushed the violets to his mouth. When he raised his eyes

they bore the same inebriated expression as hers. He kissed the flowers repeatedly, and Theodosia cried, "Let me take them once more."

She crushed them in her hands and pressed them to her face. "Theodosia," exclaimed Ruspoli, stepping toward her with outstretched arms.

"No," answered she, turning away from him. "Take them quickly."

Ruspoli held them to his lips and devoured some of them.

"Those in your hair. Let me touch them there on your head. Just once for *addio*."

She held the violets tightly in her fingers, her eyes closed, while he caressed the flowers in her hair. The purple blossoms scattered into the gold of her curls, and Theodosia was in the Prince's arms. He kissed her lips, her eyes, her cheeks, her hair. Neither could speak. Tears streamed down his cheeks.

"*Dio*, how I love thee, Theodosia. Once touch thy lips to mine, my life."

Her head lay upon his shoulder. "Thou cruel woman, thou most beautiful, I adore thee."

"I do not love thee, Alessandro. It was only the violets," said she faintly. "I am mad from them."

"Thou lovest me, Theodosia."

"I do not love thee."

"Look at me, Theodosia, my joy. Thou lovest me."

"No, it was the violets' perfume," answered she, freeing herself from his embrace. Then she held out her hand and said, "*Buona nuota*, Prince. *A rivederci.*"

Slowly she moved backward to the door, her eyes looking sadly at his, the violets dropping from her hair to the floor. Anguish drooped the corners of her lips and lined her brow. The Italian stood mutely reading the meaning of her face. Again she repeated, "*A rivederci*, Prince."

Ruspoli sprang forward, clasping her hands, and exclaimed:

"Thou dost not mean *a rivederci*, Signorina. Thine eyes tell me that we shall never meet again. They say *addio*."

Theodosia's was a faint head tone, "I said '*a rivederci.*'"

"Then tell me when, Theodosia."

Tears blistered her cheeks, and she shook her head, scarcely articulating the words, "I do not know."

Ruspoli stood in the doorway and watched her white gown disappear up the staircase. She came back and cast toward him a few violets from her hair.

"*A rivederci*, Prince."

Then she hurled herself into her room, shivering with sobs. "Purple is frightfully unbecoming, Victoire. Throw those violets away. Never allow them in the house again. Their perfume makes me ill."

Chapter XVIII

THE PRINCE RECEIVES HIS CONGÉ

THEODOSIA PEYTON had skated over cracking ice, thin as white tissue paper. It did not break. She had swum the swiftest rapids. The exhilaration but pleased her. She had walked on the edge of the precipices of the Alps. It was sport. Her head was clear as the mountain air.

When she rode, she sought an untamed horse. If she went to sea she preferred a storm. Her highly strung nature always demanded danger. It did not occur to her that it might be found in Ruspoli, unaggressive, indolent, with only his courtly manner, gentle heart, and handsome face and form to warn peril. Under all circumstances she discovered the ludicrous. This evening was like a shipwreck in the Sacramento River. Clearly she was no sort of a sailor.

Were it Stryne, for example, she would not have been so surprised. Theodosia could readily fancy being swept off her feet by his force and vehemence. Ruspoli was a humiliation to her pride and mind.

She had yielded her lips, her soul, to an inferior power.

Notwithstanding this he was unattainable. There lay the sting. Penniless but for the allowance and favor of the King, a dependent upon his cousin, she had permitted herself to be embraced by a man as far from her as tho married. Here was more wormwood for her to drink—Theodosia, an experienced general, surrounded and taken prisoner through a trick!

Theodosia recalled that the Prince declared she loved him. Of course she had contradicted, but he undoubtedly believed it. He must be disabused of the idea immediately, if the morning failed to convince him of the folly of his fancy.

There were to be no more meetings for "*Addio*" or "*A rivederci,*" but a note telling what she thought was the truth and giving him dismissal.

Theodosia assured herself that her shock was sufficient warning against further absurdity. Later she became convinced that something more than a request or a demand was necessary to rid herself of the Italian, for underneath his impassive exterior was surprising tenacity.

The girl perceived the need of escaping from the city or Santa Cruz. She knew that Ruspoli would not depart if he could find her in either place. She considered possible refuges. All were accessible to

him. Finally she thought of White Springs, a farm owned by one of the former servants of the Peytons. It lay in the foothills of the Sierras, distant several hours of railway travel, and two days' journey by stage. She was not running away, she explained to her conscience—merely making a strategic movement to the rear.

Theodosia quickly prepared for the journey. By ten o'clock she was ready to go to the station. She decided to depart alone. Only her father and Victoire were to know of her whereabouts. She could trust them. To her intimate friends she merely wrote notes explaining that she had been ordered a complete rest and repose in the mountains. She would return when restored to health. Ruspoli received the following in Italian:

"We have said *addio*, and there must be no more repetition. I told you quite frankly last evening that I do not love you. The word shall never be altered. There is nothing more to be said.

"I am leaving town to-day and I shall not return until you are gone. It is useless for you to endeavor to find me, for no one knows my abiding place.

"I dare say, I have been very naughty. Men always think that when women do not care for them. Perhaps you are right. If you are, I am sorry.

"If you blame me, be consoled by bearing in mind

that last evening you caused the most thorough humiliation of my life. That should be some happiness for you.

"I have done with flirtation.

"THEODOSIA PEYTON."

Ruspoli read the hard, forced letter several hours after Theodosia's departure. It hurt him, altho it was not unexpected. By this time he had learned that there was always an ebb in the flood of her emotions. The Prince, notwithstanding the determined, deliberate cruelty of the note, smiled at her words, "I told you quite frankly last evening that I do not love you." Again he held her in his arms as then, and his lips were on hers. He was suffocated by the perfume of her hair. Ruspoli shook his head over the vacillation of woman.

Theodosia believed that, when the Italian saw himself without hope, he would depart immediately. It was something that never occurred to him. Instead his mind traversed the full list of her friends and acquaintances. He discovered that, while she was the confidante of many women, she kept her own secrets. There was no friend who could betray her. Colonel Peyton was not to be considered. Suddenly his fist came down upon the arm of his chair, and, leaving the club where he was staying, he

ascended California Street to the Peyton house. There he asked for Victoire.

This rounded, red-cheeked, black-eyed Parisian had charms of her own. When told that the Prince desired to see her, she rushed to the mirror and then descended in a great flurry. Victoire had always believed that, if she could once fix Ruspoli with her gaze, he would turn his eyes a second time. This was her opportunity.

The Prince assumed his *grande manière.* He gave her the bow he offered Theodosia and his Queen. It was a great occasion and nothing could be overlooked. His salutation made Victoire certain that if only she had a "dot" she might be a Baroness.

Victoire lowered her glance, giving the Italian the full danger of her eyes—they really were fine—while he spoke.

"Mademoiselle," began he in French. The Ruspolis were not royal, but they had given their country several generations of diplomats. It was something for Victoire to be addressed as *Mademoiselle* by the cousin of the King of Italy.

"Mademoiselle, I know you have the complete trust and confidence of Mademoiselle Peyton. You are probably the only person in San Francisco to whom she would give her address, for she is quite ill, I understand, and wishes to be alone."

"*Vraiment*, Monsieur le Prince, Mademoiselle is indeed ill. Last evening even the perfume of violets made her hysterical."

"Indeed, all her friends regret it exceedingly, Mademoiselle," answered Ruspoli, contracting the corners of his lips to keep from showing his pleasure.

"Only news of the utmost importance could induce me to ask for her address. It is quite necessary that I speak with her."

"I regret enormously, but I am as helpless as Monsieur le Prince. I have no idea where Mademoiselle has gone." Victoire continued to shake her head and smile.

"Very unfortunate, Mademoiselle, but it would be a favor never to be forgotten if you could give me a suggestion, an opinion."

"*Non.* I am quite puzzled, a mere baby. There is San Diego. Does Monsieur le Prince think Mademoiselle is at San Diego? Hardly," she answered herself.

"I agree, Mademoiselle."

"It may be that she is at Santa Cruz. *Non?* Monsieur le Prince is quite right. *Tiens!* There is a little place called White Springs in the foothills of the Sierras—very quiet, remote, with a great deal of spring-water for the health. It belongs to an old *cuisinier* of the Peyton family. Is it possible, Mon-

sieur le Prince, that Mademoiselle is there drinking the water?"

"Very probable, Mademoiselle."

"*Vraiment?* One travels several hours by train and almost two days by stage. It is a long journey. Does Monsieur le Prince think Mademoiselle has gone so far?"

"I am sure of it, Mademoiselle."

Victoire bent her eyebrows into a bow and remarked:

"Monsieur le Prince knows Mademoiselle may not be at White Springs."

As Ruspoli departed he gave Victoire a twenty-dollar gold piece. She held it in the palm of her hand, looking first at it and then at him. Bewilderment was in her expression.

"For what?" asked she.

"You were most kind, Mademoiselle."

"It is too much, for remember, I told Monsieur le Prince nothing."

Ruspoli saluted with ceremony.

Chapter XIX

THE BETROTHAL IN THE WOOD

PASSENGERS going to White Springs quitted the car at Hopeville. The first train left Oakland at seven o'clock. It was the one Ruspoli took. There were but three or four occupants of the coach. He went into the smoker to enjoy a cigarette. Stryne was the only other traveler. On the day the socialist drove with Theodosia she had requested him to cut the Italian. It was a new reason for disliking the Prince. However, the two men received each other with a moderate show of cordiality.

There was mutual contempt existing between them by nature. Had it not been that each resolved to discover whatever Miss Peyton found interesting in the other, they would have separated immediately. So the rivals sat facing one another, each endeavoring to make the other out. Until noon they discussed in Italian impersonal European topics. The train neared Hopeville and the Prince wondered that Stryne had not left the car. He was the first to re-

fer to the present and speak of the accident of their traveling together.

"It is but a short while before election day, and I thought you had finished campaigning in the country. Your party has surely won. Further work must be unnecessary."

"We can never be certain of anything in politics," answered Stryne. "A campaign is never finished until the night before election. Even then an accident may change results at the last moment."

The brakeman called out Hopeville. Ruspoli arose quickly, shook hands with Stryne, and said:

"I am sorry, Signore, but we part here. I take the stage to go up in the mountains to visit some friends. All possible success in your elections, Signore."

"Then we shall be companions still farther, for I too, take the stage at Hopeville."

There was disappointment in the manner of both, for they felt that their journey should have ended at that station. Yet they grimly continued conversation as the stage ascended the narrow road, winding up the hills which looked down upon fertile, prosperous, yellow and green valleys. Time passed as they counted varieties of wild flowers, an inexhaustible subject in the country of California. As the supper hour and night approached both lapsed into

silence and unreservedly wondered what the end of the journey was to be.

They stayed at Pine Bluff that night and each left orders to be called for the first stage. Still the terminus of the trip was not mentioned. By noon the following day they ceased discussing the flora, altho its beauty increased with the wildness of the landscape. Ten and twenty differently colored flowers in the space of a yard no longer interested them.

From four o'clock in the afternoon until seven at night was a continuous descent of the mountain to White Springs. There was but one other stopping place for the stage, Sulphur Springs, five miles farther into the valley, the terminus of the road. There was a dismal silence. Stryne wondered whom Ruspoli knew at Sulphur Springs. The Prince raged at the double perfidy of Victoire. At last the socialist climbed to the driver's seat and talked with him.

Half an hour before White Springs was reached, Ruspoli inquired after his luggage. The socialist made no mention of his. The driver whipped his horses into speed worthy of the approach to the White Springs Inn, where he knew the maid would be awaiting him.

The few boarders of the fall season were sitting on the porch. Theodosia in a white muslin gown recog-

nized Stryne from a distance and waved her handkerchief. The stage approached with a dash, and a dramatic sawing on the reins to check the fiery animals. They came to a standstill. Theodosia stepped to the side of the driver's seat, held out her hand to the socialist, and said:

"I'm so glad you are here, Mr. Stryne."

"It is only for business, I am sorry to say. I am on my way to Sulphur Springs to pass the night. I go back in the morning."

"How naughty! I wrote you to come here. This is only a coincidence, then? Such a disappointment! I felt I must get away from town for a while, and, altho I have been here but for a day, I am so much better. Can you not stay twenty-four hours? To-morrow will be Sunday, you know."

"I am unable to remain a minute, Miss Peyton. The stage is now leaving. Good-by."

Meanwhile Ruspoli disappeared into the dining-room. When he returned to the hotel office he passed directly to his room to dress. When finished he sought Theodosia, but she had retired early. He must wait until morning.

They both arose before seven; Miss Peyton because she had slept enough, and Ruspoli for the reason that anxiety and restlessness hinder repose.

The Prince traversed the porches of the inn and

then struck out to explore the paths leading through the shrubbery and natural park surrounding the springs. He walked several miles, and, returning to the hotel, found Theodosia in a white linen gown, without a hat, the sun's rays illuminating her pale yellow hair. As she approached the large spring, Ruspoli dropped the cup from which he was drinking and waited for her to recognize him. There was no surprise nor pleasure in her eyes, merely a stiffening of the muscles of her body. The Prince uncovered his head.

"So you are here," said she simply.

Ruspoli bowed. Theodosia drank a glass of spring water gushing from the ground. Then she looked at him again and said: "I suppose you came last night. I understand some things now."

Ruspoli was silent and determined to force her to converse.

She sipped more water. "I see you took my advice, Prince Ruspoli. You have turned detective after all. Whom did you bribe?"

"No one, Signorina."

Theodosia ceased drinking water and came close to him, the color rising in her cheeks, the pupils of her eyes giving out flashes, her hair waving wrathfully in the breeze. "Speak the truth, Prince Ruspoli. How did you know I was here?"

"How did Stryne know you were here, Signorina?"

"Of course you are curious—man's curiosity," sneered she.

"Not curious, Signorina; but since you ask so many questions, have I not the privilege of one?"

Theodosia placed her hands behind her and raised her chin in the air defiantly, showing her soft, rounded, white neck. "It is not often, Prince Ruspoli, that I gratify curiosity, but I will tell you that Mr. Stryne came here because I wrote asking him, because I wanted him. Why he went away is evident. He thought I had invited you also. If you had not come he would be here now, this minute."

"I am glad I came, Signorina."

Theodosia glanced at the Italian with wrath and hurled her cup of water past him into the bushes.

"Do not punish the cup, Signorina. Punish me. I submit."

Ruspoli moved toward Theodosia. "You are very beautiful in the sunlight, Signorina."

"Prince Ruspoli," commanded she, stamping her foot, "never again dare tell me I am beautiful."

"I must speak the truth, even tho it displease you. You are charming when you are angry and when you weep—the only woman I ever saw who could bear the test."

Theodosia walked quickly past him into a path leading to another spring. She did not glance at the Prince. Each time she placed her foot on the earth it was with a stamp. In her simple white linen gown, her hands straight at her sides, tears clinging to her lashes, she looked like a tempestuous schoolgirl. Ruspoli, wearing a blue flannel morning suit and a white cap, followed her at a safe distance. Finally Theodosia turned on her heel and said in Italian, "You have no pride, have you?"

"No, Signorina."

"You have no self-respect."

"Just a little."

"No, Prince, if you had you would not go into a place where you were not invited, where you were forbidden, where you are not wanted."

Ruspoli winced. "Pardon. I was not invited, I was forbidden, but I was wanted, Signorina."

"The landlord?" suggested she.

"No, you, Signorina."

Theodosia laughed aloud. "I wanted you? Why, then, did I invite Mr. Stryne?"

"As an antidote to me, Signorina," answered he, and she wondered at the sudden determination that hardened his features.

"Pray, Prince Ruspoli, why did I come here if I wished to see you?"

"Because you were ill. You are, are you not?"

"I am not ill. I came here solely to avoid you."

"And you desire to escape me because you love me."

"I refuse to discuss anything so utterly stupid as the possibility of my loving you," answered Theodosia as she walked rapidly in silence up a hill.

"It is more than a possibility, Signorina. It is a fact."

Theodosia shot a look of scorn over her shoulder. They passed from the crest of the hill into a ravine which seemed to lead to a road. They followed the path until it came to an end and found themselves in a mazy cluster of shrubbery. In Miss Peyton's endeavor to regain her way, she turned to Ruspoli and said: "I am lost. Can you take me back?"

"I was yielding to your guidance, Signorina, but I will try."

It was some minutes before they were disentangled from the thicket, and then Theodosia's hair was snarled with leaves and bits of brush. When they reached a clearing she asked: "Can you see the way? I am bewildered. I can't tell east from west. We wandered from the path so far. Do you know where it is, Prince?"

"It's over the knoll there, Signorina. But let us

sit here under the trees while you rest. It makes you very tired to be so naughty."

Theodosia could scarcely breathe for exhaustion, and she yielded to Ruspoli's entreaties to sit on the grass. He lay at her feet and she looked out on the radiantly green hills surrounding them. He turned his back to the view of the scenery and gazed at her.

She rested a moment and sprang up saying: "Let us go back. I don't feel safe here."

Ruspoli walked in the direction indicated, followed by the girl. Then he turned to her. He said nothing, but his look expressed confusion. There was no path.

"Where is the way?" cried she in alarm.

"Just a little farther in this direction, Signorina, by those bushes."

They went around to the side of the hill and here was only brush covering the hillside. They returned to their starting point. The Italian was calm and Theodosia was in a tempest.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are no more observant than a woman? Are we lost?"

"Of course not, Signorina. Do not be alarmed, I beg. Sit down and rest."

"I will not be calm a minute until I find my way back."

"I took the wrong path. I see the correct one now, Signorina. It is there at the right."

It was necessary to descend the perpendicular side of a small ravine leading in the direction indicated. Ruspoli braced his feet on the bank and held out his hand for her to take.

"Now you must put your arm about my neck," said he.

"You are doing this purposely, Prince Ruspoli. I can descend fifteen feet alone, even if the slope is vertical."

Ruspoli did not insist, but quickly slid to the bottom. Theodosia followed and her boot slipped. She rolled down the embankment into Ruspoli's arms. Her gown was soiled, her hands and face were bruised, and her temper was rising. The Prince made no effort to detain her as she rushed way from him, exclaiming: "It is all your fault. An American could not be lost like this."

"I followed my guide, Signorina," answered he patiently.

They walked several rods the length of the ravine, and Ruspoli broke the brush ahead of him with his hand. It was the first time Theodosia had thought him strong. They climbed twenty feet toward the summit of the hill, the thorny bushes closing behind them. Ruspoli was bending forward when Theodosia

heard a low rattle. An instant later he said softly, "Go to the bottom quickly." Then he picked up several rocks, and, hurling them at something on the ground, hastily followed her.

"What was it?" asked she.

"Only a rattlesnake, Signorina."

"Then let us go back and kill it."

"No, there are too many of them. We'll return to our starting place."

Often losing her balance she stumbled over boulders and bushes in scrambling through the ravine. Ruspoli suggested, "If you will take my arm, Signorina, you can walk with safety."

Theodosia sullenly made her way alone, aided by a stick. They reached the first vertical ascent. Ruspoli paused and asked, "How do you purpose getting to the top, Signorina?"

She did not know.

"There is but one way, and it is for me to carry you."

She glanced indignantly at the Italian and made the effort aided only by a cane. She fell again, breaking the stick. There were no more to be had. Then she dug her heels into the ground and climbed on her hands and knees. Her failure was still more ignominious.

Ruspoli, looking at her, smiled, shook his head,

and said, "Poor, obstinate Signorina. How much trouble you make yourself! Will you let me carry you?"

"No," said she, seating herself on a rock. He took a position opposite her.

"I have no hat. The sun has given me a headache. My hair is snarled. My hands are bleeding. My face is bruised, all because you are an impractical Latin. Do you suppose Paul Stryne could be lost like this?"

It was the first time the Prince showed impatience. His eyes flamed like fire at night. His teeth were pressed together. "Do not talk to me of him, Signorina. I will not endure it. You shall never go back if you do."

"You brought me here purposely to torture me into saying 'I love you.'".

"It was not necessary. You do love me. You told me so night before last."

"I assured you positively I did not, Prince Ruspoli."

He answered her with a scornful shrug: "Words, words, mere words, which I usually doubt, for they are so often false; but heart beats, pulse throbs, and lips do not lie, Signorina, and they were mine."

Unconsciously to her he approached and sat on the rocks close by. Her eyes followed his as he took her hand and he went on: "Of thy own free will

thou gavest them me and thou canst not have them back. Every minute of the past two days thou hast been here in my arms. I have drunk thy breath and felt thy lips cold with passion until I am mad as thou wert when we both kissed those violets."

"It was only the violets," said she softly.

"It was love, my life. Thou hast struggled against it. Thou hast run away. Thou canst go no farther. It is here confronting thee. Wilt thou accept it?"

"It was not love," answered she determinedly, releasing her hand from his.

"What dyed thy cheeks with the color of thy blood, but love, as I spoke just now? Thine eyes were heavy. Thou didst hardly breathe as I recalled that embrace. What did it mean?"

"That you were eloquent. How can you talk of all this when we do not know our way back? It is nearly noon."

"It is nothing to me if we never go back, unless thou sayst what I long to hear."

"Night will come," shuddered Theodosia.

"*Dio mio*," said he, closing his eyes. "That would be splendid, like being alone in the world with thee."

"Tell me," asked Theodosia, "do you know how to return home? Can you discuss all these matters when we are lost? Did you do this intentionally?"

"Perhaps. A siege is always cruel, but sometimes it is necessary with a very obstinate enemy."

Theodosia asked, "Then I am to be starved out?"

"That depends upon you. I fear it must come to that."

"Would you dare keep me here after nightfall?"

"Rattlesnakes are not pleasant, Signorina."

"I suppose you do not mind making a scandal."

"Not at all. People who love never do."

"You are as indifferent to me as to yourself, being a dreadful man."

"I shall expect to suffer all that you do."

"Then I am to remain here until you decide I may go back to the inn?" asked she in desperation.

"No, Signorina. Only until you conclude that you wish to return. Do not confuse them."

"I will never speak to you again, Prince Ruspoli," said she slowly with emphasis.

"Say, rather, until you wish to go home."

Then he arose and walked away from her, explored the ravine, the sides of the hill, always keeping within call but quite ignoring her. Three o'clock came and he returned and found her sitting in the same position. Her straight brown brows were bent into a frown. At four o'clock the shadows crept down into the ravine. Five o'clock and in the dell it was

almost dark. Ruspoli came back and Theodosia was lying on the ground weeping piteously.

He bent over her and touched her hair. Sobs convulsed her frame, and unresisting she allowed him to carry her in his arms up the steep ascent. Then he removed his coat and placed her thereon. Ruspoli went to the spring and returned with his handkerchief wet, and bathed her hands and face.

Presently he whispered, "Signorina, do you wish to go home? The path is not six feet behind us. We are all beasts, we men. *Dio*, to think I could make you suffer! My atonement is I can never ask your pardon."

Theodosia arose and walked feebly and humbly by Ruspoli's side. At last she took his arm. His glance told her of his gratitude. "You are very tired, Signorina."

Theodosia nodded her head. They ascended the hill, the highest of the group, and looked down upon the valleys surrounding them. The sun was shining in the west. It was clear day on the summit. Hunger, fatigue, and alarm had quite unnerved Theodosia, and she could scarcely restrain sobs. Her resolution was sadly limp. A fallen tree barred their way. Instead of endeavoring to climb over it, she seated herself on the log, her curls falling over her face and hiding it from view. Ruspoli solemnly

sat by her side and watched every motion. Theodosia's head rested on her knees. Finally the Prince asked: "What do you wish, Signorina? What shall it be? Command me."

Her tears had dried. Only a quivering of the lips told of her past storm, as she looked straight in front of her and spoke to him in a delicate thread of her natural voice: "You compel me, Prince Ruspoli, to say what should be quite obvious to you and unnecessary for me to explain. You have spoken to me of love and deified it like a pagan. I suppose you would be greatly shocked if you were told that you are not a man of honor, that you deliver rhapsodies on love when you have none to offer, for you understand as well as I, that your heart, your words, and your body belong to the state as much as those of your cousin the King of Italy. You have no love to give, Prince Ruspoli, that is not dishonor to both of us."

Theodosia looked squarely at him as she uttered the last sentence. Ruspoli's eyes brightened, as hope took up its abode in them.

"But if I abandon all for thee, Signorina. If I offer the best and most honest love a gentleman can give. It is not uncommon. Don John of Austria, not many years ago, gave up his right of succession for a woman."

"Not one sacrifice for me, Prince Ruspoli."

"If I insist?"

"I refuse."

"Signorina, dearest lady, if the state will that thou belong to me, what dost thou say?"

"The state will refuse."

"Ah, no. I must go to San Francisco immediately. I see new avenues opening. There is my mother, my cousin's wife, the best and noblest lady in the world, and a thousand friends. To think of thee as one of us, as mine—mine. *Dio!* How the word thrills my heart. I can not breathe for uttering it. I go to San Francisco to-night, Signorina, and all that language can express shall be sent to Italy. If, after all, the state wills, the King commands, what says my lady given of the gods, Theodosia?"

She was mute.

"Is it no, my life? Tell me." He was peering into her face to read her thoughts. She plucked a violet growing by her side, and pressed it to her lips. He took it quickly from her and crushed it with kisses. Then he knelt as at the feet of the madonna, and taking her hand said, "I, Alessandro, here under the blue sky in God's presence, vow to be thine always unto the end, Theodosia." Then he touched her fingers lightly to his lips and added, "This is our betrothal."

Chapter XX

THEODOSIA TORMENTS HER LOVER

PON learning of Ruspoli's arrival at White Springs and before meeting the Italian, Miss Peyton wrote Stryne, freeing herself from blame for the Prince's presence. Since the leader of the Working Men, at Theodosia's request, had left his campaign at the critical moment, he returned to San Francisco in no very good humor.

The antipathy of Stryne for the nobleman was inexpressibly aggravated by this fruitless journey. He felt that he had been tricked by Nob Hill. When again he spoke before his men, his words bit into their ears with the acid of his first speeches. Disappointment at not seeing the lady of his quest lashed his vehement energy into a storm, which, sweeping over the city, was certain to elect the nominees of his party.

Altho Theodosia was still at the springs and they had no other friends in common, the socialist encountered the Prince by accident every day. Each was repellant to the other, and yet they were mutually interested. They preferred not to meet, altho it

seemed inevitable. There is a hidden reason which the sphinx, Life, refuses to divulge why two men at enmity must continually confront each other and augment the hatred existing between them.

Theodosia returned to town three days before the elections were to occur. She was interested unto the marrow of her bones in the results, and felt that she must be where she could learn the first returns. She knew that with success any career which a republic can give was possible for Stryne. Sometimes she imagined that her own future instead of his was to be decided by the voters of California.

Two days before election she was on her way to the park for a ride. She wore a black habit, the skirt narrowly escaping the ground, and a high, glossy hat, around which was draped a white veil, that waved behind her with her hair. She was accompanied by Adele Whiting and Percy Oglethorpe. When they passed the Working Men's Headquarters near the sand-lot, they met Stryne. He was leaving the building. Theodosia shook hands with him from her horse's back.

"You can not fail, Mr. Stryne. We shall not let you. Your men simply must succeed."

"They will, Miss Peyton. It is inevitable. I had not had unbroken sleep in a month until last

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night. The battle has been fought and won. I feel like taking a holiday."

"Come to see me, since you are so much at leisure."

After the adieux they rode rapidly to the park. When they had trotted several miles in the invigorating November air, they were joined by another rider on a sleek, shining black horse. It was the Prince, who saw them from a distance and overtook them. Naturally Adele Whiting and Oglethorpe rode on ahead, while Ruspoli and Theodosia fell behind.

"You came back to town sooner than you expected, Signorina," was his first remark, for her treatment of him was as formal as when they first met.

"Yes, I returned yesterday."

The Prince's horse started with the rider. Joy, which had been so clearly written on his face, was changed into sadness. Theodosia looked at him in admiration. He wore a tan riding suit, and his shoulders never seemed so broad nor his waist so small as then. Sitting erect on his horse, his finely sculptured nose and chin, his dead, dark eyes, encircled with heavy shadows, his clear olive skin, his compressed lips, his manner, the inexpressible, unseen something which everywhere marks a man's station —all contributed to the pleasure he gave her eyes.

"Is it right, Signorina, that you be in town a day and I unaware of it?"

"I find it most natural."

Their horses were walking very slowly. "I never know where to place you, Signorina. I think I understand you, and directly there is something new for me to learn."

"Perhaps that is why you have been so constant."

Ruspoli ignored the suggestion. "When I saw you, Signorina, I forgot everything but that last moment when we were alone together on the hill. You will probably think me presumptuous, but I hoped you returned from the Springs to surprise me. Now I find you have been here a day. I might have known better."

"No, Prince. I came back to hear the first results of election."

"Signorina!" exclaimed he, breathing heavily.

"I am extremely interested, you know," added she by way of explanation.

Ruspoli contracted his thick, black brows into a frown, his teeth biting the interior of his under lip. "Do not speak of it, I pray, Signorina," said he in a gentle whisper, "I wrote you a letter to-day. It was sent to White Springs."

"It will be four days before I receive it."

"That is too long to wait until I tell you its contents."

Theodosia saw his chest rise and fall quickly.

She knew all he had written. "Signorina," said he slowly, impressively, "I have news from Italy."

She had read it in his voice.

Theodosia touched her horse gently with the crop and he trotted rapidly. They were near Oglethorpe and Miss Whiting.

"Signorina, when may I see you to give it you? This afternoon, after we shall have ridden home?"

"No, Prince. I shall be too tired."

"This evening, then, Signorina," pleaded he.

His love was in his eyes, on his lips. She was childish enough to wish to know the end of a story, yet womanish enough to be perverse about it. "I have an engagement for this evening with Mr. Stryne, Prince Ruspoli. To-morrow evening if it suits you."

Theodosia desired a sequel to her romance.

Chapter XXI

THE GAGE OF BATTLE

IT was clear to Ruspoli that Theodosia's answer was an evasion. Let him try with entire will, he could not refrain from walking to the sand-lot that evening. For the first time he experienced pleasure in seeing Stryne. He was there in his accustomed place, the same eager-eyed, open-mouthed, mixed throng of laborers and fanatics surrounding him.

The Prince was so happy to find that the socialist was not with Theodosia that he approached him closely and listened attentively. Warmed by the pleasure of the surprise, he even concluded that the agitator might be a charlatan, a demagog, but he was not a bad fellow.

Stryne had not altered his dress, speech, nor manner since his prosperity. He stood before his audience, the future master of the State of California and the City of San Francisco, and there was not a shade of exultation to be detected. The Strynites keenly observed him and awaited some sign of arrogance. He was dressed in his blue flannel shirt and trousers.

The red bandanna handkerchief encircled his full, thick, strong neck. His black felt hat and long blue cloak were lying by his side.

In spite of all his vehemence there was the same great reserve in his poise that had never been rippled. Months of fatigue in the political campaign took the ruddy health from his countenance and hollowed the setting of his gray eyes. His face was somewhat thinner, but otherwise he had not altered since the working men rallied about him and his cry, "The Chinese must go."

Meanwhile, altho the Mongolians were still the issue, the working men had largely forgotten the evils of "coolie" labor; they merely knew they were to vote within two days to decide if Stryne was to be their Legislature, their Mayor, their Governor, their United States Senator—the next boss of California.

When the speaker's gaze met that of the Italian, it was so steady and unchanged that Ruspoli imagined Stryne did not see him in spite of the fact that he looked straight at him. The socialist was giving forth in new form his beliefs which had rung into their ears since the beginning of his career. They listened not to the words but to the music of the voice. They felt the touch of the man's presence. They were unconscious that he uttered the same

thoughts repeatedly. Stryne held them not only by his own power, but the shadow of that which was to be his within two days. The strength of the State was in his personality.

He was reviewing the especial evils of the government of California, local corruption, when Ruspoli arrived. He continued in the same strain for several minutes. Then gradually, before the audience or the Prince realized it, he spoke of the faults of national government, particularly in the countries of Europe. Passing lightly over evils existing in France, England, Germany, and Russia, he came to Italy and drove straight at it with a purpose.

Then Ruspoli realized that Stryne had observed him.

"United Italy! Free Italy!" shouted he. "What a mockery! United? United in one thing only, and that the desire to kill their King. Can there be union while there are a million subjects plotting at any cost to overturn the throne?

"Free Italy is a word the poets use. Can freedom exist where the King lives in a palace, squanders three millions a year, while a quarter of the population are mendicants, begging pennies from travelers? Can freedom prosper when a libertine is on the throne? Can a people be better than their God-given ruler? Can liberty thrive while one root or

branch of the corrupt house of Savoy is allowed to live?"

The Prince was accompanied by the Italian Consul Roma and a Russian naval officer, Lieutenant Dalgarkoff. They both understood sufficient English to catch the significance of Stryne's words, so they regarded Ruspoli intently while the socialist hurled phrases at him. No sooner was there a pause than the Prince in one quick breath of Italian asked, "Is that for me, Signore?"

For the first time Stryne appeared to observe Ruspoli. "You are the house of Savoy? Enough said."

The incident passed almost unobserved. Stryne inveighed against monarchies and monarchial tendencies and finished by again warning his followers how to vote. As he was leaving the platform, Lieutenant Dalgarkoff and Consul Roma met him and asked, in the name of Prince Alessandro Ruspoli of the House of Savoy, to withdraw what he had said.

"Gentlemen, one can not retract the truth," answered Stryne.

"Then he must fight for it," responded Roma dramatically. He was a tall, stout man, who, in spite of his red face and corpulence, still retained some of the grace of his youth when he had been a great gallant.

Stryne bowed. "Of course, gentlemen. At any time and place you wish."

"Our friend, Prince Ruspoli, has commanded me to say that in our own country, owing to your difference in rank, it would be impossible for him to meet you upon the field of honor, but since he is in a republic, for this occasion he lays aside his prerogative and accords you the favor of an encounter with any weapons you choose."

"Prince Ruspoli is very good," answered Stryne coldly. "There is no weapon with which I am unfamiliar, gentlemen."

"Prince Ruspoli would like to know if a meeting to-morrow morning at sunrise, near the San Mateo County line, will suit your convenience."

"It is the day before election," hesitated Stryne.

"Then you would like a delay?" asked the Russian disdainfully.

"By no means," answered the socialist readily. "The details you may arrange with Mr. McCann and Mr. Van Ness. By all means let the meeting occur as soon as possible. To-morrow at sunrise will be a most convenient hour. It will not interfere with my work for the remainder of the day."

Political economists have dissected Strynism in California. Historians have fixed his proper place in the story of the State. Poets of the lowly have

sung of his noble virtue, but no one has recorded the splendid grace of his heroic sacrifice when he, in those last words for honor's sake, cast back to grim destiny all that he had—his fortune, his life. Then he bravely, fearlessly stood staring into the nothingness of the future. Yet he gave up his all with the grace of a gallant who tosses a rose to the queen of the dance and wafts after it a kiss.

Chapter XXII

THE BETROTHAL IN THE STORM

THEODOSIA had passed the evening alone with her father. She wore a simple cream lace gown with crimson roses in her hair. Her shoulders and arms under the soft light of the candelabra were like white satin. Colonel Peyton and his daughter dressed with greatest care when they were to be alone together, and the father especially admired her in her lace frock. The Colonel, with his closely cropped white beard, was very handsome and imposing in evening clothes. He never was more agreeable than at the head of his own table, for he delighted in offering Theodosia the same stately courtesy, sadly old-fashioned at present, which he had shown her mother.

Colonel Peyton was taking his after-dinner doze. Theodosia scanned the pages of new magazines and books rapidly, enjoying thoroughly the pleasure of being quite alone. It occurred to her at this moment that she wasted a great deal of time with trivial people and events.

Paul Stryne's card was brought her half after nine.

She recalled her words to Ruspoli that afternoon. Jest had really become earnest. The socialist was shown into the library where she was sitting.

"It is the first time you ever came to see me unsolicited, Mr. Stryne. Perhaps after election day this will occur more often."

His white face rebuked her conventional speech. He was dressed in his customary blue suit with the red of his handkerchief showing about his collar. Apparently he was oblivious equally to her own and his garments. It was the first time Theodosia had seen Stryne overcome by an emotion stronger than he.

"Do not talk lightly, Miss Peyton," said he earnestly, "for I am very serious to-night. I feel that great changes are coming."

"So they are, Mr. Stryne. Day after to-morrow Mr. Van Ness and your entire ticket are to be elected. Isn't it splendid? Do you know, I feel proud of you; I have a sort of interest in you as if you were a part of my work, my own creation. You are not, tho. I never could help you, for you would not let me. But I tried hard, did I not? When you are all-powerful and no longer refuse to be our Governor or United States Senator, you will think of me as some one who really wanted to do something and could not."

Stryne studied her expression and manner.

Theodosia chattered on, "When you are really the boss of the whole world—I never liked the word before, but I do now—I am going to find some one who needs a position and you shall give it me. You must, for I want to be a sort of sub-boss. May I? It will be such fun, actually to know and have influence with a boss. But, Mr. Stryne, why do you not sit down. Don't tell me that you are going to remain but a second. Please do not try to be fashionable."

Miss Peyton, I can not sit. I must stand on my feet. I must move. My heart seems weak. I am pretty nervous."

"Only to-day you were so calm and certain of victory, but as the time approaches the strain on the nerves must be something dreadful."

Theodosia arose and stood in front of Stryne, looking at him sympathetically. "I must leave this house, Miss Peyton. I can not remain boxed up in one or two or three or ten rooms. I need space, air, distance. I must have action. I must walk or I shall lose my reason."

Suddenly he turned to her and asked, "Will you come with me? I need some one."

Theodosia motioned with both hands toward her dinner dress. She hastily put on a long black wrap

which enveloped her completely. Then she said, looking at Stryne understandingly, "Yes, I think it best that you have some one with you."

They left the house and and he walked several blocks in silence, dragging her along heedlessly. He went with such speed that, exhausted and panting, she exclaimed, "O Mr. Stryne, you must go more slowly. This gait is too rapid. I have a pain in my side."

They boarded a horse car. Before they had been seated long Stryne left Theodosia and stood on the platform. He returned just as they reached the end of the line on the Point Lobos road.

"Come," said he, "let us go. I can't remain longer in the car."

Theodosia was obedient to all of his whims, for she felt unable to resist. She understood why, in less than a year, he had gained control of California. It was his untamable, invincible, indomitable will. The girl started in the direction of the city.

"No," cried he, "not back to the town. That is only for sleep. We can go there any time. For life, freedom, let it be to the Cliff. We shall walk there."

Miss Peyton looked at the hard blue sky, clouded with purple and black. The moon could hardly show her face. There was a sharp cold ocean breeze and

a possibility of rain. They could not see far ahead in the darkness.

"Let us walk to the Cliff," again urged Stryne.

It was an impulse. It was imprudent. It was extraordinary. It was dangerous. These were sufficient reasons for Theodosia to consent.

During the first half hour they almost ran over the level ground. The next thirty minutes their speed slackened. Even Stryne's force began to give way. They stood on the hill overlooking the vast, roaring, black ocean. The moon had almost entirely disappeared. Only great stretches of sand behind them and at the side lighted the landscape. From whichever direction they turned came the wind in gusts. In the sky fearful clouds were meeting and retreating with the chaos and thunder of contending armies.

"Ah, one can breathe here!" said Stryne, taking off his hat. Theodosia was too fatigued for speech. She turned her broad, fur collar up around her ears and buried her hands in her pockets. They stopped quite still and surveyed the scene surrounding them. A light no larger than the flicker of a candle at the top of Cliff House was the only touch of town in the wildness before them.

They walked slowly down the hill, avoiding the Cliff House, and ascending to the edge of the ocean.

Several drops of cold water, sharp as thistles, fell, scratching the soft cheeks of Theodosia.

"It is raining," said Stryne, somewhat alarmed.

"No matter if it is," answered she. "I wish I were a sailor in nothing but storms of waves mountains high. I am made of rather common earth, Mr. Stryne, but if ever I am capable of anything above the ordinary, it is in a tempest like this. You, I fancy, are always lofty and noble. I am so only in spurts. It needs some force like St. Peter's organ, Wagner's music, or a great storm to lift me out of my selfishness."

They walked up to where the wall of the Cliff House shivered on the ocean beach. Then they went back. Water no longer fell from the clouds. Stryne considered carefully what Theodosia had said before he answered: "Do not make the mistake, Miss Peyton, of supposing that any one is very much better or nobler than his neighbor. There are hideous mysteries lying at the bottom of every sea. We all have about the same number of black spots on us. Some keep them a bit better covered than others. That is all. I have not seen you often, but I know you pretty well for all that, and I call you the most remarkable woman I ever met."

"Mr. Stryne, do not say that, or I shall think you are laughing at me. You know I am a drone. I

never had a thought for any thing or person until we met. You yourself spoiled my little endeavor at doing something. My spasm gave out, and I am what I always was and shall be, a woman with much ambition, but lacking energy to fulfil it."

"What you say may all be true, yet I reassert you are the most remarkable woman of my acquaintance, not for what you are but for what you might become. You do not realize that very few people have told you the truth. There are always so many reasons why you should be lied to. Ever at your elbow was a sycophant with something tangible or intangible to gain. No serviceable falsehood was neglected. You are a miracle. You have developed amidst this atmosphere of time-serving, into a gentle, lovable woman with a mind bursting with activity for another life."

Theodosia was swept along with the rapid stream of Stryne's utterance.

"I am not in the least unusual, but you do understand my inclinations."

"What might you have become, Miss Peyton, had you been cast into other circumstances, where you must rely upon yourself, work for yourself? Why, there is nothing you could not have accomplished."

The rain beat upon Theodosia's face as they walked

on the beach, yet she was unheeding. "Do you think so?" asked she.

"It is not too late now, Miss Peyton. You are twenty-two, just beginning life. You have half a century more of existence. What are you going to do with it?"

"Waste it, I suppose, Mr. Stryne," said she, shaking her head sadly. "What else can I do? I am like a blind man with talent for drawing. It is useless. No one can give me sight."

"You really want to see, Miss Peyton? With all your soul do you desire to act, to live all there is in life, to be on the cap of the highest wave of everything that occurs? Do you want to escape the narrow, ruinous existence which will destroy your greatness just as surely as it continues? Do you honestly long to be Theodosia Peyton, the splendid heroic woman lying dormant in Theodosia Peyton, the idler, the coquette? Tell me."

The breakers were crashing at his feet. Barbs of water were stinging her flesh and wetting the fluff of yellow hair curling from her broad, low brow. His back was toward the ocean, and she, looking up into his face, answered: "Indeed, Mr. Stryne, you outline for me just what I wish to become. If you have the secret of how it can be accomplished, give it me."

"You are willing to shake off the indolence, the

falsehood, the conventions which oppress you? Recollect it is a great deal I am going to ask you to do and be."

"I'm willing to be anything," breathed she in ecstasy.

Stryne led the way slowly to a group of boulders, close to the shelter of the embankment of the Cliff. They were seated on a low flat rock protected from the wind and storm by one broader and higher. Theodosia was equal to the severity of his gaze.

"Remember this, Miss Peyton," began he, deliberately striking a sharp emphasis on each word, "I have never asked a man or woman what I should do. More than that, when I decided upon action I considered no one. Do you believe it?"

"You look like that sort of man, Mr. Stryne."

"You have the distinction, or whatever you may call it, of being the only person who has swayed me since my career began, which was not a year ago here in San Francisco, as you imagine, but a decade since in my brain. No one knew it but I. A trivial step in it will be the election of my ticket, day after to-morrow."

Theodosia was very close to him. Elation closed her throat as she asked eagerly, "Mr. Stryne, how have I influenced you?"

"I can not tell you yet. It may be that you will alter my entire life. That we shall both know later."

"I? I do not comprehend."

"You will in the future. All I can say now is that I came to see you this evening to decide for me what I shall do. Shall I leave San Francisco to-morrow? Will you go with me? Do not speak now. You said you wished to cut your way out of the high hedge of conventions which separates you from all that is worth while."

He gripped her small, soft, tapering hand in his vise of steel. "I ask you, Miss Peyton, to be my friend, my companion, my wife."

Theodosia would have withdrawn from him, but he held her powerless with the one hand. "I did not think of that method, Mr. Stryne," stammered she.

"It is the only way."

"Your future? The election day after to-morrow, why leave them all?"

"Because I have won. What more is there for me to do? I will make another career. You do not realize it now, but you and I must be married. We are bound absolutely together. We can not escape it if we try. What will my men, who have served me, think, if I make Colonel Peyton's daughter my wife? I can not convince them that you believe with us. You represent directors of corporations, people who have liveried servants, their enemies.

In their eyes I shall be of that class. If I am to have you, and I must have you, for we belong to each other—it is our right, our duty—we must cut loose from all these connections of yours."

"Where could we go?"

"Anywhere and make more opportunities."

"Where?"

"They are in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, in any place where there are great throngs of people with grievances. We have only to choose a locality. We shall be welcomed as liberators. It is we who will do the rest. A whole life lies before us. I can see it there awaiting us, radiant and gleaming."

"I suppose we could go abroad. The conditions in Europe need so much improvement."

"There are as many wrongs in America, Miss Peyton, and the people are more easily aroused to action."

"Do you think we could succeed, Mr. Stryne?" questioned she, as if addressing her future—the sphinx of life.

"Look at the past year and ask yourself. What have I done in that time? I control the entire machinery of the State. More than that, there are forty thousand men in California who have sworn allegiance to me. I am greater in their eyes than

the State, the Nation. I can march at the head of them, if I choose, to Washington. Our numbers would increase at each step. Each of those men is armed and would die for me. That is not rhetoric, but the truth. Within six months I could have an army that would wipe out the National Guard and all our troops. Then it is for me to decide what I would be. It only needs a man on a black horse, provided that he be the right man."

Theodosia was exalted to the height of molding the destiny of her country, an object which ever appeals strongly to the ambitious American girl. It seemed to her that she was just beginning to live.

"Do you think the conditons are ripe?"

"The time is always fit, Miss Peyton. You have not studied the conditions of your State, but when I came, the people were merely suffering from the reaction of a boom. Laborers were more prosperous than in the east. There was no real reason for me that lay outside of myself. Had I not come, the working men of California never would have realized that they had reason for complaint. I made Strynism in half an hour."

"It was wonderful, Mr. Stryne," said she, whispering as in a trance. "It is genius."

"Only my will, Miss Peyton. I was stronger than all combined. I never yet found a force that can

resist my will. It grinds rock to powder and makes meal of flint. You will not stand against it because I love you and my love has the power of my will."

Stryne did not loosen his grip on her hand. Rain was dripping from the clouds. It was a wrathful night. Wild, white-maned waves broke at the base of the Cliff House and made its foundation quiver with fear. Theodosia felt herself growing weaker and Stryne gaining in force as he said: "My heart, my soul, my mind, my will, my fate demand you for my comrade. I will not fawn or plead or whine like a stage lover. Passion is not my life. It is action. You will know to-morrow when we go away that you are my destiny and I am yours."

Theodosia sighed. "I don't think I shall go, Mr. Stryne." Both hands held her one. His eyes stared at her from black caverns like a tiger's in darkness.

"You don't think you will go?" thundered he; "what do you mean, Miss Peyton? Are you to be nothing but a recollection of imbecility? Do you dare play the coquette with me? I am not the kind of man that a woman like you can seek or encourage unless she be in earnest. Are you mad when you say you don't think you will go? What is the matter with you? Is it that damnable Italian?"

"You are crushing my hand."

"Answer me, is it he?"

"I'm afraid so, Mr. Stryne."

"A woman like you can say that? Do you know that if you become his wife without Humbert's consent you are nothing but his mistress?"

"But if the King allows it?"

"Grant the absurd possibility. What will you be? The Princess Ruspoli, royal by a morganatic marriage. Is that your ambition?

"You do not dare to tell me that a woman of your intelligence can love a ridiculous fellow with great staring, meaningless, vacant, black eyes and a courtier's bow. He is not a man or he would not be dragged behind your carriage, fastened to your train and walked upon for a year. I credit you, Miss Peyton, with not being absurd. If it is not he, it is rank you desire. Good God, I wouldn't rule Italy as a gift. I would not waste my energy in tearing down that miserable, shaky throne. If you must reign, why not take something worthy of you? England, Russia, or America—North or South? You may have your choice, and I will deliver it within the year."

The passion of the night, the ocean, the storm, his voice and presence, swept her before it like water in a gale. She believed all he said.

"What will society say, Mr. Stryne? Even you know nothing of your family."

"My people, Miss Peyton? If the world asks for

them, say L'Ouverture, Washington, Lincoln, Cromwell, Mirabeau, Kossuth are my brothers, and Revolution is my father."

"That is rather indefinite, is it not? Society asks so much more."

"Society! Society! You who are going to be the consort empress of any kingdom you wish, allow society to question? Why do you not arise to the dignity I offer? Miss Peyton, you are to be society. Let us talk of that."

"It is all so sudden, like a dream of another world," said she in bewilderment.

"Theodosia, come, rise."

Mechanically she stood in front of him. "To-morrow at three we sail for New York."

Stryne held her away from him to watch her countenance. Almost fainting she fell forward into his arms and cried: "If we are bound together as you say, let us launch that rowboat and go wherever the currents carry us. We may as well. Life is so strange. What does it matter?"

"Theodosia, do not act like that," exclaimed he, thrusting her out at arms' length. "Be a woman worthy of what is yours. Strip off that coat."

He tore it from her and cast her hat aside. Her hair clustered about her shoulders and brow like an infant's.

"Take off those gloves," commanded he. Immediately she obeyed him. Her drenched white frock clung to her form. The train of her gown was wound about her feet. Standing on the rocks in the darkness, her white arms and shoulders dripping with cold water, she was like the shadow of a woman springing from the sea.

"Now stand by my side, bare arms and shoulders to the tempest. Let it beat upon you, my wife, and do not flinch. This is the way you and I must always be together."

"Cling to my hand or I shall faint," gasped she.

"Ah, this storm is divine, Theodosia," exclaimed he, holding his face upward to the clouds. "Our birth has taken place in it."

Theodosia reeled toward him but he held her erect. "I am nothing but clay," she cried, "and you are trying to make iron of me."

Stryne grabbed her in his arms to prevent her from striking on the rocks. She was limp and unconscious. He wrapped her in his long, heavy cape, and calling a carriage from the Cliff House, he placed her inside and gave her warm drinks.

When she regained consciousness they were on their way to the city. Her cold, wet clothing had been warmed by the heavy blankets enfolding her. It seemed to Theodosia that she was recovering from

the effects of a narcotic. Altho she did not open her eyes until she had recalled every incident of the evening, she felt that he was sitting by her side, regarding her. They had begun to climb and descend hills before she looked at him. As she expected, he was watching for that sign of consciousness.

Her hands were inside the blankets. She felt with relief that he could not touch her. Stryne's face was coarse as she looked at him. His eyes were small and cruel, his head and neck too large. In his ugliness lay his power. Yet she recalled that during the evening she had thought him handsome.

The carriage was closed. In town there were no organ tones of the wind to excite her senses. The black, raging clouds, the vast, tumbling, heaving, roaring sea, the lightning playing above, arousing her nervous imagination, were absent. Stryne himself was silent. Only the drizzling rain fell upon her ear. The scene was as disenchanting as an empty opera house after a performance of the Valkyrie.

Presently she closed her eyes to avoid Stryne's gaze and sat back in her seat. He felt her pulse to see if she was faint. Theodosia was happy that he made no attempt to caress her. She almost shuddered as he touched her wrist. What folly it was to fancy she could marry him! No, he was merely a

story to read, then to close the covers of the book and to put it away forever.

The carriage stopped in front of her home. Stryne clinched her wrists in his hands. He looked at her intently and said:

"Remember, Theodosia, to-morrow at three the South American steamer. I will come for you at one. My entire life is staked upon your going. I shall rely upon it."

His voice brought back the scene at the Cliff. The possibility was not so remote as before he spoke. Some of the storm's grandeur was in his being. With his hands pressing her wrists, the blood was forced back into her heart, her will was given up to his. She was quite honest when she answered, "I will be ready."

At the door she repeated the vow. The moon shone brilliantly between the black clouds, and as he stood uncovered, the band of scar was distinctly visible on his forehead. They parted in the same spot where they met. He stood in a like attitude when she first opened the door upon him. After all he was not to be despised.

It was Stryne who watched the light in her chamber turned out. He did not know that she cast away all her clothing and went shuddering to sleep.

Chapter XXIII

THE DUEL

VAN NESS and all Stryne's political friends used the most forceful arguments to dissuade the leader from a duel. The nominee for governor declined to serve as second the day preceding elections. He reasoned that it would be disastrous to him as well as to his chief.

"The time has passed for dueling in California, Stryne. It will only mean the defeat of the entire ticket if it occurs," declared Van Ness. "What if something serious should happen? If you were unfortunate enough to be wounded, our ticket would be elected; but suppose Ruspoli should fall, every candidate would be slaughtered. Delay until the day following election, then I shall be happy to serve you."

"You do not understand the situation, Van Ness. I shall ask no favor of Ruspoli," said Stryne. "I am fully prepared for any event. I am sorry you can not act as my second, but the duel must take place to-day."

This was a conversation which occurred at two

o'clock the morning of the meeting. McCann had served under every political flag and chief. He never deserted his leader so long as there was hope of success. He was very happy to make himself useful to a man of Stryne's power.

"Philosopher" Picket, an erratic lawyer who acquired his title through a useless and vague knowledge of an infinity of topics, was chosen in Van Ness's place. Picket offered no dissuasion, for he was a swarthy Southerner of the type wearing a broad-brimmed hat and long coat. He was always armed, had assisted at many duels, and could conceive of no other method of adjusting differences of belief. He was familiar with the codes duello of the United States, England, and the continent, and was never happier and more at ease than when arranging a meeting between two gentlemen.

It was Picket who, at the interview between Consul Roma and Lieutenant Dalgarkoff, led the conversation, fixed upon the weapons, time, and place. McCann merely listened, for he knew less about dueling than anything else. The smell of powder always startled him.

Ruspoli slept a little that night and Stryne did not go to bed. He passed the remaining hours at the Working Men's Headquarters, reading a dictionary. His friends cited this as an instance of his

wonderful coolness, but really it was an indication of nervousness. When his mind strayed beyond his will he brought it back with the hard facts of a dictionary. He did not prepare for death and gave orders to his subordinates who lingered with him, saying he would return at ten o'clock.

Ruspoli made a testament, wrote a letter to Theodosia, left one for his mother and another for the King of Italy. They were given to Consul Roma to be delivered in the event of his demise.

About five o'clock in the morning several carriages left different parts of San Francisco and drove southward about ten miles to near the San Mateo boundary line. The air bit upon the flesh, and the wind from the ocean seemed frozen. The drivers frequently lost their way in the intense darkness heralding dawn. They proceeded slowly like a funeral train.

Finally they drew up on the broad embankment of a creek, so dark and sluggish that it had forgotten to flow. Ruspoli and his friends were already present. Stryne brought with him the seconds and a surgeon. Another carriage containing some of his followers who had learned of the duel soon arrived. They awaited silently the break of day, the signal for preparation. Soon came the grayish-pink dawn and the breeze was stronger. In the cañon where they were the shadows had not risen. It was still night.

Carriages were left at the roadside and all walked up a valley where the sward widened and there was a broad, green, level space. Ruspoli was one of the best pistol shots in Italy, and Stryne was famous for his accuracy and aim. So those weapons had been selected by the seconds.

The followers of the Prince and Stryne separated into two groups. Picket held a consultation with Consul Roma and Dalgarkoff. McCann looked wonderingly on and hoped they would both fire into the air.

The pistols were examined and loaded. Stryne secured the choice of weapons by the toss of a dollar. Dalgarkoff marked off the ten paces agreed upon by both sides.

Stryne stood apart and did not busy himself with the details. His brow was quite placid, but his mouth bent downward in determination. He waited patiently for proceedings to be finished. His friends, less accustomed to similar scenes than the foreigners, were ill at ease and restless. McCann gripped the socialist's hand and turned away his face. Only Philosopher Picket was master of himself.

Consul Roma warned all to avoid the line of fire. The principals took their places. Ruspoli faced the morning light and raised his eyes reverently as a worshiper of the sun. The wind was warmer. The

scent of morning was in the air. Trees and grass blended into a thousand shades of green. Life and the day were young and beautiful. There was every reason to live.

The Prince removed his hat. Roma held it in his hands. Then the Italian took off his overcoat. He was clad in the gold and blue uniform of the naval officer when in dress parade. A ruffle of lace peered out from the neck of his coat, the highest button of which was unfastened. He stood six feet in his varnished, high-heeled boots, as erect as a slender young tree unbent by years or storms.

Ruspoli was freshly shaved; his hands were recently manicured, his hair was brushed straight back from his brow as tho he were going to a ball or wedding. His countenance was saffron, his lips were crimson like the sun flaming above the hilltops, and his black, mysterious eyes glowed with exultation. His finely chiseled brow, nose, and chin stood out like a drawing on white paper. Apparently he was not nervous. He was as calm as Stryne or any one but Picket.

The Philosopher remarked to his principal: "You don't need to kill the Prince. He is dead already. Stick a knife into him and he would not move."

The agitator was disheveled and showed the effects of lack of sleep. He was wrapped in his long blue cloak, which he laid aside. Then he took off his

coat, and, in his blue trousers and flannel shirt, exposing his bare neck, stood stalwart like a man carved out of rock. His square posture, the turn of his big bony head, the straight, heavy brows, the mold of his wrist and hand showed Stryne's spirit determined to remain in life. There was a touch of bravado, of daring in his manner not characteristic of him. As he looked at the Prince his glance was almost contemptuous.

Ruspoli caught the expression and came out of his impassive attitude. He slowly walked the ten paces to Stryne and bowed ceremoniously.

"Signore," said he in Italian, "I feel that you have deliberately provoked this meeting. In Italy it would be impossible. My only reason for making the concession is that you are honored with the friendship of the lady whom I have chosen to be my wife. We are equals, Signore. *Addio.*"

The socialist rarely allowed his exterior to betray his inner struggles. Still those observing saw his mouth tighten, and a look that would give no quarter come into his eyes. But Stryne merely saluted the Italian, who returned to his post. Soon the punctilios of the code were observed. Consul Roma approached the socialist, made a feint of seeking concealed weapons, touched his waistcoat, bowed, and withdrew.

McCann crossed to the Prince, unbuttoned his coat, and searched in every pocket for hidden articles. Then he passed his hands over Ruspoli's chest. It was the first time the Italian showed irritability, and, altho he submitted, he frowned and tore into the flesh of his lips with his white, strong teeth. This clumsy action of McCann disturbed Ruspoli's poise. He took all the loose coins from his pocket and gave them to his opponent's second. Stryne also threw his money to Roma, scattering some of it on the grass.

There was nothing more to be done, and the two men faced each other while their seconds cocked the pistols and set the hair triggers. Then they were given into the hands of the combatants. The socialist and the prince measured the distance between them with their eyes. Their friends and seconds realized that the battle was to be earnest and it was the doomsday of one of them. The time was come when they felt the earth could no longer contain them both.

Lieutenant Dalgarkoff read the conditions of the meeting in slow, labored English. Philosopher Picket, with what he considered his most telling dramatic tones, reserved especially for affairs of honor, gave elaborate instructions as to the firing. It was a nice occasion and called for deliberation

and all of Picket's most effective adjectives. Duels were becoming infrequent in California.

The men stood looking at each other, perhaps for the last time. The muzzles of their weapons hung toward the ground. There was an instant of painful silence which no one hurried to break. It seemed hours to Ruspoli. Finally he turned his head toward Roma.

"Gentlemen," asked the Consul impressively, "are you ready?" There was eagerness on the part of both to answer—"Ready."

Again there was a pause. Roma delayed a second longer, apparently hoping that something at the last moment would prevent the duel. The Prince once more looked at his second. It was becoming embarrassing, for Stryne and his friends apparently imagined the hesitation was instigated by Ruspoli.

"Fire! One!" rang out lingeringly like the tolling of a bell.

There was a report from a pistol. It was the Italian's. His weapon was discharged before he brought it to a level. The lead burrowed into the ground a yard from Stryne's feet.

Ruspoli had made an excellent shot, but it had fallen short of the mark. The hair trigger of his weapon was too fine. He was not familiar with that

particular kind of a pistol. Stryne had won the choice of weapons.

In a second there was a crack and a flash in the air. It was the socialist's answer to Ruspoli. With the snap of the pistol the Prince flinched, bent his body to the right, then to the left, and made a mighty effort to hold himself erect. His seconds stepped to assist him, but he waved them away. Then in his endeavor to stand firm he stretched his head upward as if gasping. He could not maintain an upright position. His weapon dropped from his hand. His skin seemed to wilt. He drooped, finally fell prone to the ground and lay on his back, his great eyes staring upward.

Stryne silently remained in his position, and his quick ears caught a moan from Ruspoli in Italian, so faint that Roma barely understood and comprehended: "Theodosia, *Dio mio!* to die so! O my bride of the violets and sunshine, my wife, come, or I shall never again see thee!"

Fatalist and superstitious, these wild words narrowed Stryne's existence to Theodosia, the Prince, and himself, and he was certain that the first two were secretly married. It explained her hesitation to flee with him. As Stryne fixed his eyes upon Ruspoli, each muscle of his countenance relaxed as though he were drunk. In that second, when failure unavoida-

ble confronted him, the Prince's whisper hissed and boiled into his ears, making tumult of his mind. Like a drowning man, his life in fleeting panorama passed before him, and he saw in Theodosia's yellow curls the snare, entangled wherein he had taken his first step toward failure and was now facing ruin. He had dreaded that specter too long not to know him when they met as well as he would have recognized death. A cold black wall seemed to shut every one from his sight. He was glad when McCann said:

"Your man is hard hit."

"The gentleman is undoubtedly badly injured," remarked Picket, and this brought Stryne to the necessity of considering the present. His thick arms were folded on his chest. The muzzle of his pistol projected from behind him. A look of inquiry came into his eyes. His only interest in the Prince seemed to know if a second shot was expected from him.

"Your honor is satisfied, Mr. Stryne," said Picket.

"If I had struck two inches to the left and a little lower down, the shot would have been mortal," remarked he, and the blood rushed back into his gray countenance.

When assured of the helpless condition of Ruspoli, he put on his coat, called his friends, walked to the carriages and drove to the city. The Consul

who saw Stryne leave his fallen antagonist without a handclasp, cried to Dalgarkoff: "I am Ruspoli's friend, and I will not see murder committed like this. Those weapons were juggled with. Let us follow and kill that scoundrel."

The Russian replied: "If we are Ruspoli's friends we will remain here and help him."

"Not the sympathy of an Indian after he has tomahawked his victim."

The surgeon persuaded, "Be calm, gentlemen. Your best judgment is needed by the Prince."

Ruspoli lay in the Russian's arms, his eyes half closed and breathing through his mouth. His life's reddest blood gushed forth, and crimsoned the green carpet of grass and moss.

When the medical man cut away the fallen combatant's uniform, tore off his lace and linen white shirt, his chest and wound were bared to sight. Even the surgeon shivered. With each breath arterial blood came in spurts, staining his flesh. The ball had torn a tortuous course among the vitals. It entered the right breast between the second and third ribs, fractured the edge of the sternum, sped over the heart to the upper lobe of the left lung and proceeded upward through the arm pit. As the blood gushed forth it seemed that there could be none left in his body. Ruspoli's hands and cheeks

were like the skin of an Easter lily. He lay helpless and nerveless.

"Stryne said the wound is not mortal, that his aim was bad. Is it true, doctor?" asked Consul Roma.

"His aim was meant for nothing but death. I do not see how it could be improved upon," answered the surgeon.

"Do you mean the Prince is dying?" queried Roma.

"Look at that red blood," replied the physician.

"There is absolutely no hope?" asked Dalgarkoff.

"He has youth and no vices. Perhaps the miracles happened. If they did, they may be repeated."

One of the seconds went for a mattress and a spring wagon, while the surgeon remained to bind up the wounds and check the great flow of blood. When the Prince spoke it was with intense agony.

They begged him to make no endeavor.

Within an hour after he fell to the ground he was slowly conveyed to the large comfortable home of a prominent rancher close at hand. There he was tenderly placed in bed by his physician and friends. It was from this place that the public had the first intimation of what had happened.

In San Francisco the news was that Prince Ruspoli was dead. It sped to Theodosia, and crossed the continent and sea to Italy.

Chapter XXIV

THE LOSER WINS

BUSY San Francisco had long been at work when the information was posted on bulletin boards, shrieked forth by newsboys, gossiped about at the clubs, exclaimed at in boudoirs, that Ruspoli was killed by Stryne. Van Ness was in dismay. Every convert to the Working Men's party hastened to declare he knew it could not be true. Candidates for office and their friends who hoped to obtain something from them, were horror stricken.

On the other hand, Republicans were jubilant, not over Ruspoli's death, but that Stryne was defeated. They were grateful to the Prince for falling before the socialist's pistol. In the committee rooms it was suggested that they erect a monument to Ruspoli.

News associations telegraphed to the most remote villages of the interior that there could be no better practical demonstration of the folly of seeking new political idols among anarchists and fanatics. Our fathers undoubtedly were filled with wisdom and

they clung to the old party, even though imperfect. The Republicans saved the country once, and it was safe to trust them in the future. Old and prominent citizens shook their heads in approbation and were grateful to be rescued from voting for a murderer. There was but a day more before election and the grossest libels of Stryne were circulated and published in the afternoon. Republicans were thankful that there was no time for their stories to be contradicted. Roma's impulsive exclamation that the weapons were juggled with was telegraphed everywhere as a fact. Indignation was aroused to a terrible pitch. Had Ruspoli been an American, lynching of Stryne would have been suggested. But even San Francisco's most loyal Republicans could not arouse themselves to that punishment for killing a useless Italian Prince.

Theodosia, unconscious of the events of early morning, had arisen and penned a letter to Stryne. She felt that she could never say no to that will of his if she saw him in person. So she wrote, realizing as she did so that it was the coward's method.

She unhesitatingly admitted to herself that she was ashamed of her conduct. Consequently she wrote with great decision. Even then the currents of Stryne's stormy will swept over her, making her

hesitate and soften her refusal. Sometimes she laughed at herself as a ridiculous, inexperienced matinée girl, enamored of Claude Melnotte or Faust. Because the rôle and the scene in which he appealed to her, she had been willing to give herself to the actor himself.

Camelias and clematis are beautiful, but they need the warmth of the tropics. Society was as necessary to her as the sun to those flowers. She knew she was interesting, charming, and handsome, but she needed all her settings of jewels, brocades, tapestries, and lace. In any other condition she would be a withered, shriveled blossom.

Then she asked herself if she honestly desired to aid the poor, the working classes, as she had so often professed. Theodosia refused to admit that she was affected. Yes, that wish was earnest, but she preferred being a socialist in a brown-stone house, and having the smartest turnouts in San Francisco. To dwell among the unfortunate and unclean, to work with them and for them as Stryne's wife, would be noble, but she was not fitted for it. Some other woman, much better than she, could do that, for Theodosia Peyton, by temperament and environment, was a dilettante.

While perusing her letter for the last time before despatching it, Victoire ran to her mistress, and

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flinging a newspaper into the air, exclaimed in almost incoherent French and English:

"Mademoiselle, Monsieur le Prince *est* killed by *ce vilain* Stryne. Mon Dieu, *c'est terrible*, Mademoiselle. So nice, Monsieur le Prince. He bowed so when Mademoiselle go away, and he say to me 'Mademoiselle,' *comme si* I am a *grande dame*. I send him, Mademoiselle, after you, for he loves so great deal. Poor Monsieur le Prince!"

Theodosia screamed, "Victoire, what are you saying?" and leaped after the newspaper. It was all true. Ruspoli and Stryne were enemies. The journal said political foes. She was the cause of it. There was a quarrel last evening at the sand-lot meeting. It was her fault. Ruspoli had begged to be with her. Stryne provoked him and the Prince issued the challenge. Of course, and hers was the blame. Worse still, juggling with pistols like a trickster and assassin. That visit of Stryne's, how clear it was to her now as she read. When he extracted the promise from her, he was deliberating the Prince's end. It was her duel and Ruspoli's death was hers.

"Oh, Victoire, I am a murderess!" groaned she, pressing her face into her hands as she fell into the French woman's arms. In her dazed condition her mind reviewed Ruspoli's love for her. He, with

everything to lose and nothing to gain, had devoted himself to her for a year. Deliberately she tortured him because she could. Everything that a rejected lover can suffer, he endured patiently. He asked nothing but her love and she had bestowed it. To think he would never know. If only she had been a woman instead of a coquette and told him. If only she had risen above her vanity. She was conquered and Ruspoli was assassinated—shot by her small, white, dimpled hands. She dared not look at them, for she knew her tears had stained them with blood.

"Mademoiselle, they say Monsieur le Prince is not dead, only dying."

"Only dying," groaned Theodosia, "only dying, Victoire? Do you know what that means?"

Then she arose to her feet, her countenance lighted by hope.

"Perhaps, Victoire." Colonel Peyton came.

"Perhaps, papa," repeated she, as if mad. "Perhaps. Oh no. Only dying."

During the entire ten miles that Colonel Peyton's carriage was driven with horses at run-away speed, Theodosia lay in her father's arms repeating those words like a refrain.

"He is growing weaker," said Dr. Knapp, who had known Theodosia from childhood. "I can not let you see him."

"That is the very reason why I must. You shall not keep me away from him, Doctor. I am going into his room."

The physician bowed to the inevitable and opened the door for Colonel Peyton and his daughter. Ruspoli lay on the pillows, looking as if already dead and in his shroud. He was staring vacantly in front of him when his eyes lighted on Theodosia. All that morning she had stood there. Was it she, or merely his old dream of her? Colonel Peyton was with her and it was she in the flesh.

Before he could speak, she leaped across the room and knelt by his low bedside. He feebly placed his arms about her shoulders and smiled for the first time since wounded.

"Joy of my life," whispered he in Italian, raising her hand to his lips. "My life and soul, at last thou art here."

Since Theodosia had heard of his condition, she had not wept, but shivered and moaned. Her face was saddened and drawn, but her eyes were dry as she flung herself at his feet. When she saw him and heard him speak, tears fell like thorns of ice. Sobs and groans prostrated her head on his pillow. When she could give utterance, she knelt enfolding his face in her hands, and whispered in his own language:

"Listen, Alessandro, I want to confess to thee. I have told thee a falsehood so many times. Alessandro, I love thee."

"Ah, Theodosia, to think I should hear it only on my deathbed. It was hard to know I was going to fall this morning, but *Dio, Dio!* Now it is terrible. To die when my life has been given me," faintly articulated he, his arms holding her with new strength.

Theodosia pressed her mouth to his bloodless cheeks and lips. They were her first kisses. He closed his eyes and opened them as he said, "My joy, I can not die now."

"Alessandro," continued she, "thou wast ever so kind and I so cruel. Thou wast ever so honest and I false. How many times have I looked at thee and said, 'I do not love thee' when my heart and brain were shrieking, 'I love thee, I adore thee.' It was a contest between my pride and thee. A few times I gave way. I felt I could not love thee without dishonor. I was always thinking of myself. I am so petty, I should have given my whole heart to thee unreservedly, and relied upon thy honor. That could never fail me."

"Never, Theodosia, dearest lady." For the first time there was a flush in his cheeks and life in his eyes.

"Alessandro, I adore thee. I have loved thee always. Often I longed to hurl myself into thy arms

and cry, 'Take me, take me.' I have ever belonged to thee, my dear, and was afraid of my love and thine. Thou canst never forgive this cruelty. I do not ask thee. Live and make me suffer. Bruise me, beat me, torture me, for what I have done, but do not die unless I can go with thee. I want it to be a scandal. I hope the newspapers will say I am responsible for it all. I hope I shall be humiliated and pointed at on the streets as the murderess of my lover. I want any agony or affliction, but oh, *Dio*, I cannot endure thy death!"

"Thou lovest me, dear heart. Repeat it," said he in great pain.

"I adore thee, my love," answered she.

"And wouldst thou ever have confessed to me, Theodosia?"

"This evening, dear, I was going to tell thee. If only I had seen thee last night."

"I do not wish to reproach thee, but if I had come to thee then, how much more of life we might have had. Think, soul of mine, what I felt this morning, believing I must die unknowing thy love."

Dr. Knapp came, saw the color in Ruspoli's cheeks, felt his pulse, and said:

"Miss Peyton, you must come away now."

The Prince touched the physician's hand and held it with all his force. "Doctor, you will let me

live. I want to live. A little while ago it did not matter, but now I must live."

"You shall have the best attention, Prince Ruspoli, but you ought not to talk more at present."

"May Miss Peyton come back soon, Doctor?"

"If you will rest."

Dr. Knapp left the room, and Colonel Peyton and his daughter followed. When outside the door, Theodosia confronted the physician with disheveled hair and wild eyes. She placed her hands on the medical man's shoulders and said:

"You must give me your honest private opinion. Is Prince Ruspoli going to die?" The physician did not answer.

"I know what that means, Dr. Knapp. You did not reply when I asked you that question about my mother once, but I say you must not permit him to die. I hold you responsible for his life."

"I give my best skill, Miss Peyton, always," answered the physician.

"If he dies, it will be your fault. You must find some elixir to keep him for me. He is young and strong. There is no reason why he should not live. I will never leave him. You can not tear me from his dead body. I will be buried alive with him."

"Be calm, Miss Peyton. We shall do all that is possible."

"It is the same old story. He is going to die. We are to be separated before our happiness has begun. I want to know the worst, doctor. Tell me the truth. Am I correct?"

"I'm afraid you are, Miss Peyton."

"Doctor, I knew it. You can not keep me from him another minute. I shall remain with him as long as there is life."

Theodosia burst open the door and flew back to the bedside of the sick man. She had cast aside her wraps and wore the loose, flowing, soft, cream satin morning gown in which she was dressed when she heard of the duel. Her long yellow curls, unrestrained by an ornament or a pin, hung about her shoulders and almost smothered him as she fell on her knees by his bedside and held his head in her arms.

The Prince lay back on the pillow with a sigh.

"I know," said he, "what the physician told thee. I shall never go back to Italy alive."

"No, no, Alessandro, it is not true. Thou shalt live. Thou must live, or we will die together." His mind was clearer and better poised than hers, even in his pain. Ruspoli closed his eyes to restrain himself from shrieking in agony. Then he continued in a whisper that none but she could understand:

"Dearest life, I knew before the duel occurred I

should never return to Italy. Yesterday when we rode in the park, I had just received the news for which I wrote and cabled prayers to my mother, the Cardinal, my father's cousin, and Humbert. It seemed to me that God is love when the intelligence came that the King willed that I come and beg thee to be my wife. What caprice, what inspiration, moved my family to consent, I know not. I had the despatches in my pocket when I fell, but I gave them to Roma together with my testament for thee. Had the answer of my mother been a refusal, I should have abandoned my family and country and lived in the United States. Then, altho I possess little, I should have begged that thou accept me. I was afraid thou didst not love me enough for that."

"Oh, yes, Alessandro, but I could not ask thee to make a sacrifice and repent."

"My only reason for clinging to my rank was that I have so little to offer at best. If there is any pleasure for thee in being the Princess Ruspoli, I desire thee to have it. I know I shall never return to my country, dearest lady, but wilt thou not go for me? I should be so much happier if, before I die, I know thou art all mine, that thou camest unasked and gavest thyself to me. Wilt thou be my bride and carry our message of love and gratitude to my people?"

"Alessandro," sobbed she, her face buried on his throat.

"Thou dost not respond, my life. It is not too late. There is a priest not far from here. I saw the little church as we passed. Roma has sent for him for the last absolution. First let him make thee my bride."

"I am thine now, Alessandro," whispered she.

"I know, but wilt thou be, Theodosia, the Princess Ruspoli?"

They were in close embrace when the physician said:

"The priest is here."

Chapter XXV

A VIOLET BRIDAL

THEODOSIA promised to return within fifteen minutes, and left Ruspoli alone with the father. She went into another room and bathed her face in hot water and cologne. Then she combed her hair in the full pompadour worn at that period, and dressed her curls, fastening two together in the back with a clasp. She straightened out the folds of her tucked white satin morning gown, and was impatient to go back to the Prince.

When Colonel Peyton and she reentered, the room bore the appearance of having been prepared for her coming. Ruspoli had not looked so well since she first came as he did at that moment. His eyes were unnaturally bright and the blood was concentrated in his cheeks.

The priest, a small, bent, sad-faced, dark-eyed man, whose closely cropped hair was sprinkled with gray, arose and allowed Theodosia to pass to Ruspoli.

"How strange, Theodosia, dearest life, that this is my wedding day and then I die."

"We are to be married to-day, Alessandro?" asked she.

"With thy permission, my joy."

"I will not leave thee, dear, but I must send for a gown. I shall be ready in three hours."

He shook his head as he looked into her eyes and whispered, "That will be too late. Now."

"As I am?"

"Yes, as thou art, dearest."

"In this boudoir frock?"

"What does its name matter? It is beautiful and so art thou. One can not stand upon ceremony when one's life is counted by minutes."

"I am such a funny bride."

"Thou art mine."

"There are to be no guests, Alessandro?"

"Enough, my love. Thy father, Roma, Dalgarkoff, and Death."

"Not the last, Alessandro," said she, kissing his eyes. "You are going to live. Every minute you are growing stronger. Oh, to think that after all you will recover. What bliss! Our entire lives to be together. Let it be soon. Father, we are ready," said she, quickly turning to the priest, who stood at the open window talking with Colonel Peyton.

The rancher's kindly wife brought roses from the garden for decorating the large, airy, barren sleeping-

room, but the priest waved her away. It was a union between a Protestant and a Catholic upon which the Church frowned. Her disapproval is so strong that no like marriage may be celebrated within her sacred walls. Not a flower or blossom shall be employed to make one forget that the Church is wrathful.

The thoughtful hostess ordered the bed turned so that the man and woman about to be married might look out upon the lawn. Before them was a large garden surrounded with shrubbery and trees. At midday the weather was warm and the windows were thrown wide open. After a few seconds, Ruspoli took a deep breath and looked up toward Theodosia.

"Is there perfume in the air, dear? What is it?" asked he faintly.

"Violets, Alessandro," exclaimed she.

"Yes," said the rancher's wife. "There is a great bed of them below your window. Would you like some?" asked she, looking at the priest.

"Yes," answered Ruspoli. "Please bring this lady some for her hair and gown."

It was only a handclasp, but Theodosia and the Prince understood. She wore the violets in her curls and on her shoulder. Then when she approached him, he touched his lips to the flowers and they both smiled.

All the witnesses came. They were prepared for

the ceremony. Theodosia sat in a chair by the bedside and listened to the short form of marriage. Again the Church showed displeasure and nearly all that is beautiful in the service was shorn from the text. Only the necessary questions were asked and answered. Then the priest, in a voice conveying deeply pained disapproval of similar violations of custom and tradition, gave a short exhortation to the couple. They were husband and wife.

All knelt while the father bestowed the blessing of the Church upon the Prince and Princess Ruspoli. When he finished, Theodosia was still prostrate in prayer and her husband's eyes were closed. There was no organ to swell out joy and hope. Only the sobs of the bride sounded mournfully through the chamber.

Chapter XXVI

THE PASSING OF STRYNE

THROUGHOUT the entire day before elections, bulletins of Prince Ruspoli's health were eagerly sought. While the Republicans did not hope for his death, they could not but realize that their chances of success were immeasurably strengthened by his decline. From the windows of the journal of the Working Men, the crowd read that the Italian had suffered only a slight wound. All the Republican newspapers announced as a victory for them that Ruspoli was sinking each hour. Between the rival dailies the people were in a lamentable state of confusion.

Meanwhile Stryne's friends and enemies were seeking him with equal fervor. The opposition was anxious that he be within reach of the law in the event of the Prince's death. They looked forward to seing the leader of the Working Men arrested for murder.

His own chief supporters and friends were still loyal, but they feared lest the duel cause the defeat of the party. They sought him in every possible

place, for they believed that if the assembled voters of San Francisco could only hear his speech and feel his earnestness, his honesty, and his intensity, they would not swerve. His should be the call of the general rallying a scattered army.

After all, what had Stryne done? Merely accepted the challenge of a foreigner, an Italian prince; to a duel, and wounded or killed his opponent. What else was there for a good shot, a man of honor? Suppose Ruspoli should die, it was merely a misfortune of war. The earth would be rid of one more parasite.

In spite of their arguments they realized the damage it did their cause, and abandoned hope of success in the State. However, they believed that, should he return by eight o'clock at night, one speech on the sand-lot would elect the mayor and a part of the legislature. It did not hurt their confidence in him that he disappeared, but they did not like to have the words "fugitive" and "coward" flung at them. If only Stryne would come.

Each constituted himself a detective, and men ceased work to seek him. Ten thousand dollars reward was offered to any one who would give information of his whereabouts before eight o'clock. Telegrams were sent in all directions for his apprehension. Attics, cellars, and alleys were ransacked

and he was still missing. Only the ship sailing for New York at three o'clock was overlooked.

Stryne's friends tramped the streets until the morning hour, waiting for some news of their champion. They were even humiliated by being compelled to deny the rumor that he had committed suicide. None who knew, had met, or even seen him, considered it other than absurd. Strynites were dazed and vaguely wondered who would lead them, express their grievances, and declare their rights. Who would voice Strynism? Men who had been cemented together by the leader's will and labor, looked at one another as strangers.

Like a haze at first, and then definitely, it crystallized in their brains that each one unassisted must work out his own sufferings. At this they rebelled, for they recalled their power and might of yesterday when each felt himself ruler. Gradually they realized that they had been working with strength borrowed from their leader. They were as helpless as atoms. They would continue to grumble their wrongs to themselves. They would submit to the domination of the old bosses and corporations. Strynism was extinct because Stryne was no longer present.

During the day the news from the bedside of Ruspoli stated that after a decided improvement, the fever suddenly grew higher. The physicians were

quite helpless, as it was certain that blood poison had resulted.

The vote was unusually large owing to the intense interest taken in the elections throughout the entire State. Results showed that Van Ness, the nominee for Governor, carried the city of San Francisco by a good majority, but in the country he was defeated. Stryne was a new god for the conservative interior, where the voters were shocked to learn that they barely escaped electing the ticket of a murderer.

In San Francisco, the fortress of the fugitive leader, the candidates of the Working Men's party for the mayoralty, judgeships, and the legislature without exception were elected. They filled their offices quite as men under the old bosses had done. Many of the radicals became conservative and corrupt. This seemed to them atonement for Strynism, which they hoped would be set down as youthful indiscretion.

The voters of the city had confided in Stryne during too long a period to alter their reliance for any reason. When his seconds reported Stryne's exaggerated view of the harm he had done himself in the unfortunate duel, they grieved over his delusion. It was not their part to desert him, even tho he had forsaken them at their most critical hour. They

looked every day for his return in triumph. And in years to come the working men of San Francisco expected Stryne's reappearance with superstitious faith akin to that with which the ancient English awaited the coming again of King Arthur.

Chapter XXVII

STRUGGLING BACK TO LIFE

WITHIN Theodosia's nature was the secret of making others content with themselves. To cause a friend to feel that the particular gown she was wearing suited her style, gave her pleasure. Another acquaintance was cheered by a wish from Theodosia to write verses on the coming and the going of the color in her cheeks. She routed despondency. In consequence she was much liked wherever she went.

One of her delights lay in bestowing kindness. She enjoyed thoroughly the incense ever arising to the nostrils of Lady Bountiful. At two and twenty she supposed that she had no enemies. After she became the Princess Ruspoli she was surprised to learn, even in her husband's sick-room, that she was the most unpopular woman in San Francisco.

During the twelve months that she played fast and loose with Stryne and Ruspoli she had provoked gossip. Every one was as kind as ever. She had done nothing as yet to occasion snubs. The Peytons were too powerful for that; but her acquaint-

ances were awaiting their time, and, as soon as some one found the courage and occasion, were prepared to administer the deserved rebuke.

In the boudoirs of society it had been talked over thoroughly from all points of view. The Almanack de Gotha was called into service, and the lineage of Ruspoli was read until it could be recited. It was out of the question that he marry Theodosia Peyton, for he was an Italian and of the blood royal. Those men never marry out of their class, said they. Consequently, even her best friend felt no small degree of pleasure in seeing Theodosia become more deeply entangled in the flirtation. It is a profound affection which honestly regrets the misfortunes of others.

When Theodosia suddenly became the wife of Ruspoli, every one realized that she was "deep" and "designing." Jessie Traver said: "I never saw a person yet, with big blue eyes, who could not tell a lie a second. Heaven deliver me from ingénues."

It was regarded as a breach of friendship that Theodosia had always had the audacity to pretend that Ruspoli was tiresome and a bore. Such double-dealing, and what a two-faced minx! Then her acquaintances consoled themselves by saying that the Prince's mother would never receive her. That was some pleasure after all. However, sad to relate,

Theodosia had despatches of welcome from the Dowager Princess Ruspoli.

What of that? The Italian was a beggar, absolutely without a cent. Not quite, either, for he had an allowance of something like ten thousand a year, and Colonel Peyton was to double or treble it, if necessary.

At least Ruspoli was going to die. That much seemed certain. Then Theodosia would be worse off than ever, with no recompense for all the unpleasant newspaper scandal and gossip. It is so horrible for a woman to be concerned in a duel. So the fashionable world at last found solace. Society could afford barely to do its duty and pity the poor Princess Ruspoli.

Only Adele Whiting, wiser by far than women years older than she, was sufficiently sagacious to consider that possibly Ruspoli might live. If he did, she saw no reason why she should not be the dearest friend of the Princess Ruspoli as well as of Theodosia Peyton. Court life is agreeable. She had heard of the Prince's brothers, cousins, and friends, and no woman is ever quite without hope.

So each day found Adele at the rancher' s house, where Ruspoli lay, the flame of his life giving its last flicker. Miss Whiting purchased bouquets of roses that she really paid for with money which should

have gone for an evening wrap. The flowers were fresh daily, and she begged Theodosia to allow her to do something for her husband.

"You look positively insane, my girl. You might at least let me comb your hair. The Prince is delirious now, but when he recovers he will want to see you pretty."

Theodosia had not slept for days and nights. The color left her cheeks. Her hands were as white as her husband's brow. Her hair was in one great curl hanging down her back. She still wore her wedding gown.

"I don't care how I look, Adele," said she, resting her tired head heavily on her friend's shoulder.

"To think, Theo dear, I should live to hear you say that!"

The lips of the Princess quivered as she spoke. "Adele, you must never flirt. If a man is worth anything at all and deserves your love you should be honest with him or leave him alone."

"Theo, I said you looked mad, and now I know you are. If your husband were not ill I should smile at your preaching to me against flirtation. Why, I never could find any one to flirt with because you always took the men for yourself. I am glad you are married. I hope that now I shall fare better."

"I have been so wicked, Adele," sobbed Theodosia. "Ever since this fever came on Alessandro, I prayed hours that I might die. You don't know the despair which makes you want to sink dead to the floor. I never was so unhappy in my life before."

"Theodosia, I am going to Colonel Peyton and compel him to take you away from here by force, if necessary. You must not do this any longer. Nurses are created especially to care for the sick, and the Prince must have a nurse."

"He shall not, Adele. No one shall do a thing for him but myself. You don't know what it is to see him not recognize me. Fancy, Adele, he looks at me with his great black eyes and has not the faintest idea who I am. It is almost as bad as if he did not love me, and I brought it on myself."

"I don't understand what Dr. Knapp means by allowing you to get into this condition. Besides, you know nothing of the work of a nurse and you are liable to do more harm than good. Do be your sensible self, Theo, and let me get some one to help you. Once you were a dear girl with such heaps of common sense."

"I can not expect any one but myself to understand," sobbed Theodosia.

Dr. Knapp came and Adele asked, "Doesn't the Prince need a nurse?"

"Very badly."

"Then why do you allow Theodosia to wear herself out and kill her husband by taking care of him?"

The medical man could not say, but the real secret of his great success in the fashionable world was that he allowed his patients to follow any caprice not obviously suicidal. Even so, he made no more errors than his contemporaries, and he was the most popular doctor in town. Theodosia had insisted that no one aid her in nursing her husband, and Dr. Knapp yielded.

A result of the interview between Adele Whiting and the physician was that a nurse went immediately to Theodosia's relief. Then Adele returned to her study of Italian social life. She looked carefully through the Almanack de Gotha to learn how many of the Prince's cousins were unmarried.

Miss Nash, the nurse, had a gentle voice, a soft touch, and velvet footsteps. She soothed Theodosia with her sympathy. Then, talking to her as if she were a baby, she brushed out her hair strand by strand. Finally, she became almost drowsy. She lay on a cot by the side of her husband's bed. When he started up with a terrible hallucination in his delirium, she leaped to his side and cooled his

wrists and brow. The nurse could not persuade her to lie down.

Then she sat in a chair by the bed and saw the struggle he was making with death. He beat the pillows with his hands and groaned. His cheeks were ablaze with fever. Theodosia bent over him and pleaded, "Alessandro, dost thou not know me? Only look at me, dear. It is I, Theodosia."

The sick man chattered on in his own tongue, unheeding his wife. Presently he leaped from his bed toward the windows in search of cooler air. Had not Miss Nash and the Princess restrained him he would have fallen to the ground below. Again he was placed in bed. Then the nurse obtained his temperature, and she looked at her thermometer with affright.

"What do you see?" asked Theodosia, terror stricken, as Miss Nash went for the physician. "Is it death?"

"No. Only a crisis," answered the nurse hastily.

Before Theodosia could observe what the Prince was doing, he took a large bucket of ice water standing on the table near by, and held his head therein. Then he covered his body with the cold liquid. She fled in alarm for the physician and nurse. When they returned, he held out his arm to her with a smile and said, "Theodosia." It was his first con-

scious moment in three days. His fever was broken. Hope dawned on the doctor's countenance. The nurse placed her hands on Theodosia's head and said, "Your husband will live."

The Princess Ruspoli laughed, cried, embraced every one, and fell by her husband's side in a fit of laughter and shivers which resembled hysteria. Then she yawned spasmodically until she almost strangled. Presently the nurse gave her some medicine that caused sleep.

At noon the next day she awoke, her husband and nurse watching her. It seemed that in one night she had grown years younger. The Prince was weak and very pallid after the fever and enormous loss of blood, but recovery was not far away.

"Thou art going to be well, Alessandro," cried Theodosia, leaping from her couch. "I am so glad, and together we shall live happily to the end of our days, just like a fairy story. Isn't it glorious? The morning is beautiful. Miss Nash is so good. Dr. Knapp is so kind. Papa is so dear. Oh, life, what a blessing!"

Chapter XXVIII

THE LAST MEETING

VERLOOKING the silent, weary, yellow Tiber flowing through Rome is a huge, stern, square *palazzo* which has rows of long windows, sculptured with wonderful art. Its giant porticos, vast courts, endless corridors, immense galleries and halls all betoken sovereign pomp. In one gallery are the marvelous frescoes of Annibale Caracci. These vast rooms have exquisitely carved ceilings six and twenty feet high. The walls are bare, and the blending of all that is best in modern and antique furniture is in the mansion. Once it was occupied by Pope Pius III., an ancestor of the family. It is the Palazzo Ruspoli, and one of the few in Rome inhabited only by the descendants of their forefathers. Nearly all the others are let to parvenus, merchants, or foreigners.

Four years after the marriage of Theodosia and Prince Alessandro Ruspoli, this was their home. His mother said of her daughter-in-law, "The sun shining from Theodosia's hair of gold has lighted and cheered our Palazzo."

In truth, since her coming the penetrating chill of the walls had disappeared. Light and warmth dispersed the gloom of closed windows, which made the palace resemble a tomb or prison. Her happy, joyous nature pervaded each dim, musty corner. She opened rooms that her husband's generation scarce knew existed, and gave them the air of being occupied. Her presence modernized Palazzo Ruspoli without altering it. With new blood and new life the new world revived the ancient.

The return of Prince Alessandro from the United States with his bride marked an historical event in his family. His mother was of the Savoys, and the Ruspolis had ever retained their blood unpolluted by foreigners.

Theodosia's arrival caused the greatest excitement that had come to the family in a century. She was not even Spanish, nor French, nor German, nor English, but an American. To fancy that a Ruspoli could marry an American, to fancy that Alessandro could become an iconoclast!

Prince Alessandro's mother awaited the coming of her daughter-in-law with sickening heart. Surely this bride was an ambitious American who had married her son for his title and rank. Undoubtedly this pushing, ambitious young woman would take from her all her rights but those of a

dowager. She felt it hard to be second in the Palazzo Ruspoli. She was a tall, erect, queenly woman with a thin face, aquiline nose, square, well-set chin and dark eyes, brilliant like black diamonds, that still preserved youth's fire and beauty. Honesty, loyalty, justice were in the lips, the brow, the poise of the head. Not the Queen herself was so securely enthroned as she in the hearts of those dwelling in Palazzo Ruspoli. Now, thought she, this power must be given to a foreigner, the wife of her eldest son.

Cousins of both sexes, aunts, uncles, the rulers themselves, Humbert and his gracious, beautiful young consort, were filled with interest in their new kinswoman. She was the latest royal toy imported from America.

Since it was not in Theodosia's nature to be affected or anything but her cheerful, merry, natural self, the Ruspolis and the Savoys were charmed by *la bella Americana.*

Theodosia, with her ready sympathy and tact, speedily comprehended the fears and doubts of her mother-in-law. Instead of taking from that royal lady's power, she augmented it by giving her one more subject, for she charmingly submitted to be nothing but the daughter of the Palazzo Ruspoli.

When the older Princess saw this, her fears for

her own sovereignty abated, and her love for Theodosia daily grew. Often she thought one of her own brown race might not have been so tractable as this daughter of California with the glint of the gold of her State in her wonderful tresses.

When the young nobles of the court saw Theodosia, they approached and begged the honor of a presentation. These men felt that she was much too beautiful to be in love with her husband and they already saw in her a new beauty for their conquest.

Young Prince Luigi Colonna, who thought he understood his world of women, was one of these. When he offered his most elaborate compliments to Theodosia, she looked at him with the amazement of a young boy. There was not a smile in her eye nor a poise to her head to show that she realized they were of different sexes. It was disconcerting to this hero of romances. Indeed Theodosia, from the beginning of her life in Rome, bore herself with that dignity and freedom from coquetry that only satiety furnishes, and which a reformed American flirt alone can assume.

Their first child was a little maiden named Theodosia, with hair of flax and the brilliant eyes of the Ruspolis, composed of the blue-white iris and large black pupils. Her brow was from the other Theodosia, and she had the full, decisive lips of the Prince.

She was a perfect blending of California and Italy. She and her sturdy, fair brother, Alessandro, wound their fragile arms about their parents' necks like tendrils and made the Prince and Princess more than lovers. Their affection had blossomed and they were husband and wife.

Sometimes when these four were together, Theodosia said to the Prince, her eyes moist with tears: "Alessandro, I am afraid to be so happy. I don't deserve it. I know something terrible is going to happen. It is not possible to have so much joy without paying for it in some way."

"Dearest lady," said he, kissing her hand as before they were married, "we paid for it long ago in California, *non è véro*."

"*Sì, amóre mio*, so we did. I am so happy I almost forget those dreadful days."

It was at this period that the sluggish, sleeping, Roman population was aroused into a state of activity. They ceased lounging on the grass where they were awaiting work and food. Life may sometimes arise from the dead. They lived in the sun, but they proclaimed that its rays could not give them bread. The King spent millions a year while Lazarus's sons inhabited the land.

These idlers sprang to their feet and shook the palaces of the old nobles with their cry for work and

food. Humbert was a kindly man, but quite helpless when confronted with these demands of his people. It grieved him to refuse his subjects labor and sustenance. But where were they to be had? What did it matter to them if he had several millions a year? Even if he gave his revenue to the poor, it would make only a few less mendicants. The dignity of the state might better be supported.

Why should his people have this spasm of discontent just as United Italy was beginning to thrive? Surely these people were better off than their parents or grandparents. It was annoying. If only he had a Cavour! However, no Cavour arose to his succor, and revolution stalked over the seven hills of Rome.

It rumbled in the north, south, east, and west. It was on foot, on horseback, and drove in a carriage. It howled at the door of his palace. It roared up the Appian Way, stirring the ancestors of Rome in their tombs. It was everywhere directed against the House of Savoy. As if another family could do better.

So they would like a republic. They wished to see Italy at the mercy of plunderers and politicians. Already they were the incurable abscesses of the new government. Humbert's subjects demanded more of the same species. It was unbelievable.

Yet the revolution would not down. Wherever

the Savoys dwelt, hordes of the ragged, dirty, and hungry huddled and yelled for bread. They had forgotten the work of the great Victor Emanuele; and now desired to dethrone his nephew and all his kin.

Humbert spoke to mobs of them and begged their favor. Imagine one of God's appointed rulers asking the indulgence of his people like a mere president! He might as well reign over a republic.

Still the revolution grew in Rome and spread into the provinces wherever one of the House of Savoy abode. It swept down from the mountains and blazed up from the peninsula. Fires had been kindled in a score of places simultaneously, yet who had struck the match none could say. There were numberless insignificant leaders but no visible head, altho plans and results were definitely outlined.

Revolution came from Germany, the home of unbelief, said the government. No. Their real enemies were in France. Perhaps after all they were within their own borders. If not, they were beyond the ocean, in the United States, the abode of all evil. Or could it be that want unaided had aroused these people?

It was no longer to be doubted that the situation was alarming. The government, which heretofore had been lenient with the revolutionists, called out the troops. Every royal palace was protected. A

regiment of the King's guards was stationed in front of the Palazzo Ruspoli.

"I knew something like this was coming, Alessandro," cried Theodosia, clutching her frightened children in her arms. "It is not the fault of Humbert, poor man, nor any of the Savoys, but it is entirely mine. I know it. I have been so sinfully happy. I was too naughty and wicked. God did not punish me immediately, but waited until I am trebly vulnerable through thee and these two babes. Now I know I shall lose you all."

Ruspoli took them in his embrace and said:

"My joy, my life complete, as if thou couldst have anything to do with this. Thou dost not understand the Italians. Why, they prepare a revolution as quickly as a chemist a prescription. This trouble is no one's fault except that of the dead, the climate, and circumstances. It was made a century before thou wast born. It is merely a step in civilization."

Outside the rioters with guns, clubs, knives, and picks beat up against the soldiers. One of the mob fired a shot.

"What is that?" cried Theodosia, starting toward the window.

Ruspoli held her head in his hands and pressed his thumbs tightly over her ears while the report of half a hundred guns filled the air. There was silence

broken only by the sound of fleeing feet. The Prince forced the ladies to remain in a barred, secluded room while he looked out upon the street.

The soldiers were on guard and had almost dispersed the mob. The rioters carried their wounded with them and a few remained behind, struggling to remove a dead body. Ruspoli saw these half-dozen men taken prisoners, and ran below to release them.

"Colonnello, we are not living in the dark ages. Let those poor fellows have the body of their friend."

"You do not understand, Prince Ruspoli. There is the key, the mystery to this revolution. A score of men were wounded and still the rioters advanced upon us steadily. When this man fell, they broke and his followers fought for his body like dogs over a bone."

"Let them have it, Colonnello."

"The government will not allow it, Prince Ruspoli. The outbreak was put down by our soldiers to-day. We must have this man's corpse to learn who the other conspirators are."

Theodosia was by her husband's side.

"Go back, I pray," said Ruspoli. "This is no fit place for thee."

"May I not see as well as thou, Alessandro?" pleaded she. The Prince and Princess Ruspoli and the colonel went down the broad stone steps of the

Palazzo to the street where the soldiers guarded the prisoners. The captured rioters looked prayerfully at the Prince. They had placed their coats under their leader's body.

The chief lay quite rigid, his blue clothing stained with red life gushing from his heart; his pallid face was thin and drawn. The lips were parted. His gray eyes, set in deep sockets, stared upward as tho they could see. It seemed to Theodosia that they smiled as they met hers. Extending across the broad, thick, ivory brow was a pink mark like a scar. The Princess clutched her husband's arm. Their glances met with full understanding that it was Stryne.

"I told thee, Alessandro, that this revolution is my fault," said she faintly, closing her lids on the view of the dead.

"That is the man, he with the scar, Prince Ruspoli. What a miserable wretch, an anarchist who believed he could rule Italy," remarked the old colonel in disgust.

"Perhaps he could, better than we, Colonnello. There is something in the man which makes me think he should have been a prince, but instead of a crown he received a scar. Colonnello, I speak for the government. Give his body back to his friends."

THE END.

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